

THE
MERE MAN
AND HIS PROBLEMS

CHARLES M. SHELDON

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The Mere Man and His Problems

By
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Author of "In His Steps," etc.



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LOS ANGELES

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Dedicated to
The Mere Man's Wife.

A Plain Talk From "The Mere Man" Himself

THE Mere Man asks for the privilege of a little talk with you, if you will kindly give him the time, a little about himself and a little about his problems.

I belong to the great unadvertised number of American men, whose names never appear in the society or scandal columns of the daily press. I am not often seen in the moving pictures or portrayed by characters that walk the stage. Sometimes, it seems as if I did not exist. As a matter of fact I am in the majority who make up the population, counting one hundred and ten millions of the people of the United States.

I am the man whose problems do not get discussed in the magazines, and yet my problems are talked about more than any others, because they are the common, everyday problems of the average American home.

In this book I want to have the privilege of talking with you who read, about the things in which I believe you to be interested as much as I am, especially if you have a family like mine, a wife like mine and children like mine.

So this is going to be a very plain and homely confession right out of a man's own experience

about the common, homely things of everyday American life, which seldom gets into print, is not often discussed by preachers or reformers, but which I have found to be of intense interest to myself.

You will find out, if you read my narrative, something about my wife, my children, my church, my business, my amusements, my creed and myself. You will also find something about the things which interest me and something, also, about the things which have troubled me—as far as I have gone. But I hope, also, that you will find some answers to many questions which have been raised, not only by my family, but by myself.

I have called many of these things in which I am interested “problems,” but they are not problems which cannot be solved. I would not confess to you something which is a puzzle to me, without at least opening the door of hope and drawing the picture of a future which had in it more than the past.

You will find as you go along that the things which have interested me most are those which have to do with conduct. Nothing else seems to matter very much. I am going to talk about things that relate to housework, to the homely things that centre in a kitchen, the everyday things that belong to a schoolroom and with it all some of the experience which goes down deep into the valley of the shadow of death and others which reach up high into the sunshine of heaven.

I am going to tell you frankly in this book how

I spend my Sundays and my Mondays. Something about my creed—what I believe and why. I am going to discuss with you what sort of a man a father ought to be with his children and tell you something about their problems, as they affect the life of their father and mother. The neighbours will also come in as furnishing problems outside the home and there will also be something said about the relations which exist between the American home and the national life.

In other words, I, a Mere Man, but as I believe, representing a majority of the unadvertised population of this country, have had some experiences which are very likely the same as your own, and, frankly, I want to help any of you who have passed through the same valleys and over the same hills, perhaps seeing some things which you have missed and pointing out some of the better ways from which perhaps, your feet, like mine, may have strayed.

If you feel enough interested to glance through the table of contents which follows this talk, I hope you will also feel enough interest to go on and read the book, and if, after you have finished it, you feel like writing me a letter telling me what you think of it, I shall feel greatly pleased and shall be glad to answer your letter, if I find in it, as I think I shall, something worthy of a reply.

I thank you.

CHARLES M. SHELDON,
"THE MERE MAN,"
TOPEKA, KANSAS.

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WHEN "MOTHER" WAS ILL.

FIRST of all, I want to say I am just an average citizen, one of the one hundred million of this great and glorious republic, with an average business, an average income (never runs above thirty-five hundred a year), an average set of friends, a wife far above my station (with whom I fell in love some twenty-five years ago, and falling yet, and hope never to stop), with three children, two boys and a girl, the older boy in college, and the younger one and his sister finishing high school.

We live in a fairly average house with eight rooms and a kitchen. My wife, myself and children belong to a church, the name of which you would know how to pronounce if I were to spell it. We all go to Sunday school, and don't understand why the neighbor's family doesn't go, and on the whole I suppose we are just about as well behaved generally as most average families.

One evening when I came home, as usual, and took up the paper, my wife said, with a very curious look on her face, "What do you think! Jennie is going!"

Jennie was our hired girl. We don't call her that now, but we did when we first hired her twenty

years ago. I did not realise the meaning of what my wife said, and I replied, flippantly: "Where is she going? To the movies?"

"She is going to get married!"

"Married! I haven't seen a policeman around here for a year."

"She is going to marry that man in Chicago. She has been corresponding with him for five years. He is a fellow countryman. You must remember."

Our Jennie, I should have said, is a Swedish girl, and I had heard of this correspondence from an occasional statement made by Jennie herself, but I had treated the matter lightly.

I laid down my paper, and the joy of life seemed to be suddenly clouded.

"But how can we live without Jennie?" I said, looking as serious as I felt.

"I don't know," said my wife. "It will mean a lot of things to have Jennie go."

And so it did. I will not dwell on the lot of things that happened after the sorrowful day that Jennie went out of our house and home, where for twenty years she had cooked and swept and washed and ironed and made the beds and purchased the food, and tended the children when they were little, and endeared herself so much to us that, now that she has some children of her own, she has named the first three after ours.

I will skip over the tragedy of the trials we had with cooks who couldn't cook, and housekeepers whom we couldn't keep, and washers who wouldn't

wash. But one day I noticed that my wife was looking very tired, and I wondered if she were getting old. I had never thought of her as an old person. It struck me like a blow on the heart.

"My dear," I said, "you look tired."

"I am tired," she said, "tired of keeping house with incompetent help. And right now there is no help of any kind. There is hardly a housekeeper in town who can get help for love or blarney. I am afraid we may have to do what so many others are doing and go into an apartment house."

"An apartment house!" The very thought sent a chill, accompanied with fever and ague, down the place where a minute before I had had a backbone.

"Never!" I said. "There must be some way out."

"I don't know where," said my wife very wearily. And with the words, for the first time since I had courted her, she fainted away.

I did not know what to do, but while I was trying to think of something, she came to. Then I sent for a doctor, and when he came he prescribed bed and a complete rest for several weeks, and that is how it came about that one Mere Man out of the one hundred million in this glorious republic took up the housekeeping problem. It was just simply a case of the Problem walking in and saying, "How d'do! Come to put up with you for a while. Where's your spare-room?"

I hesitate to speak of my experiences during the first week in which I boarded that Problem. But

first of all I called a family council. I am proud to say that every member of our family came out strong at that meeting. The older boy said he would cut classes and give up college to help on the entertainment of the Problem. He said he would not miss some of the classes anyway, especially mathematics, which he disliked. It did not seem to me, however, that what he proposed was necessary; but I suggested certain duties to him, which he did with fidelity and efficiency. The boy and the girl in high school also expressed themselves cheerfully ready to quit school, but again I vetoed the proposition as unnecessary, if they would do their share of entertaining the Problem in the style to which he was accustomed. They accepted the challenge and stood by the chief cook and dishwasher, which I elected myself to be.

It would not be worth while to relate the time I had boarding the Problem during the first few weeks he was with us. My wife did not get any better, and one week I had a nurse to board along with the Problem. There was an epidemic in town, and all the hospitals were full and I could not secure a place in any one of them. I will pass gently over the experiments I made with two or three housekeepers, whom, by dint of profiteer promises, I succeeded in enticing into the house for a few days apiece. So about the time my wife began to convalesce enough to permit me to attend to some of my business, I was giving the Problem the time of his life, and this is now it was done.

I had at first found it a desperate feat to watch

toast in an electric toaster, to remember how many hours the eggs had been boiling, to "turn the bacon over often," as the directions on the wrapper said, to keep the oatmeal from burning on the bottom of the dish, pour the cream off of the top of the milk bottle and wash the one of yesterday and get it out on the back porch in time for the milkman, and to set the table. And to do it all at once, without spilling things on the kitchen floor. I came to respect my wife's business ability more than I had ever respected the ability of the president of the bank where I sometimes put in money and often drew it out; and I shall never cease, as long as I live, to wonder at the skill and mental efficiency that can prepare three meals a day for a family of five people and keep a house going so that it is a home. I take off my hat to the housekeepers and home-keepers of America!

But to get to the real thing, after I had learned the requirements of the Problem. A sample of one day's proceedings will answer for the whole week, with some changes in the bill of fare.

I was the first person up in the morning, and the kitchen fire was started by seven o'clock. We have natural gas in our town, which simplifies kitchen fires and cooking generally. The oatmeal had been put into the cooker the night before, so all I had to do was to put the cooker dish into a pan of hot water on the stove. We drink mild instant coffee, so a small teapot of water was started boiling for that. An electric stove, made in compartments, was attached on the breakfast table and bread cut

for toast. The girl set the breakfast table the night before.

By the time I had the bacon going, the older boy was downstairs, looking after the furnace. The younger boy wasn't quite so prompt always, but he never failed to appear by the time breakfast was ready; and he did gallant work helping his sister wash the dishes before they started for school. The girl also made her mother's breakfast and took it up to her.

From the time the match was struck which lighted the gas to the time we sat down to the table was twenty minutes, or twenty-five at the most. I insisted, I think with good reason, that we must not get demoralised by eating out in the kitchen or off the top of the stove, and that our table manners must be such that the Problem would have to use a clean napkin every meal, and not hurry. After we were all seated, we would have grace said, always remembering the invalid upstairs. Then the girl, who presided in the place of her mother, would start the toast going, and I would bring in, with the help of the older boy, the oatmeal and bacon. If we had eggs (in case the hens of the district were not on a strike), we boiled them (the eggs) on the top of the electric stove. Our regular morning meal consisted of oatmeal or some other cereal, hot toast, mild coffee, a little bacon for those who wanted it, and, sometimes when the market permitted, boiled eggs.

After the meal was over, the two boys would help clear off the table, and run the carpet-sweeper

around the dining-room to pick up crumbs. Generally the girl and her brother would have time to wash up all the dishes before starting off to school. Meanwhile the college boy would have a visit with his mother a little before starting for college, which is only two or three blocks from where we live.

Each member of the family, I forgot to say, in the division of labour, took care of his or her own bedroom, making up beds and sweeping some time during the day, after the airing-out process had been faithfully observed. On Saturday afternoons the boys and the girl took the vacuum-cleaner and went over the entire house.

At noon our children at the high school ate at the *cafeteria* of the school and did not come home. The college boy would come home; and during the time his mother was getting well, but was not yet allowed to do any work, he would get her lunch and his own, which for himself consisted of a bowl of bread and milk, apple sauce (which, by the way, I learned to make with great success, after I had burned about a bushel of apples), and a sandwich. During the wife's most serious illness, I stayed with her during the day, excepting a part of the time when a college girl came in to help.

The evening meal was our most elaborate one. I cut out the golf and the Chamber of Commerce after five o'clock and came right home and got to work in the kitchen for the Problem, who by that time had an appetite as big as an income tax.

We had codfish and cream and baked potatoes, the latter baked in the compartment of the electric

stove under the dish above, that was bubbling with the codfish. Bread and butter, often a lettuce salad with dressing furnished by the grocer, some kind of fruit, and once in a while, a pie that the girl had made. I don't think the pie was always up to standard, if there is any, and sometimes the girl's brother, who went to high school with her, would ask her what happened to the carburetor or the starter or the differential.

Everybody helped to clear off the table, wash the dishes, set the table for breakfast and get things ready for the next day. With every one helping and the girl singing, "Every one works, even father," the work was soon out of the way, the sitting-room lamp turned on, the furnace fixed for the night, and the family sitting around in mother's room, telling her what a jolly time we were having, and prescribing another week of complete rest.

I want to say here that the whole family kept mother in bed longer than she said was necessary. But she had the resting-time of her life, and when the colour came back into her dear face and the sparkle into her eyes, and the strength into her life again, we all thanked the good God that she was spared to us, for we had never realised before she was taken ill how much we loved her and needed her.

Well, we think we have solved the Housekeeping Problem without moving into an apartment house or a hotel and losing our home. I reckoned that by doing our own marketing and cooking and cleaning we are saving so much that I am putting

money into the bank oftener than I am drawing it out. Our breakfast cost us, on a careful computation, about ten cents apiece, and our evening meal twelve or, at the most, fifteen.

The time we spend doing the housework is so well divided up among the five of us, even now, when the wife helps, that it is not more than three hours a day, or perhaps on Saturdays or special cleaning days, four hours. My wife is growing young again. On the whole, we have the Problem to sleep, and if once in a while he has a nightmare, we change the bill of fare and try a simpler diet.

I am becoming such a good cook, even if I do say so, that if I were to fail in my business I know where I could get a good job as a chef in a hotel at five thousand dollars a year. Not bad for a thirty-five hundred dollar man!

II

OUR OLDER BOY

THE Boy in our home is a fine boy, if I do say it, and he has never given us much anxiety until lately. He has begun his college course, after finishing High School with credit, and we are proud of him because he is so steady and has such a good record in his studies. Until lately I have been so absorbed in my business, making my thirty-five hundred a year, that I think I have let the Boy's Mother assume most of the responsibility of bringing him up in the straight and narrow way.

But a few evenings ago, when the children were out of the house and I had settled down with a new novel, a good detective story, my wife said, as she looked over the sitting-room table at me, "I'm getting worried about the Boy."

We have always called the older son "Boy" because his full name is Boynton, and his school-mates have shortened it up.

I dropped my book on the table and said, "What's the matter?"

"He is beginning to smoke."

"Smoke! How do you know?" (I had almost said "Holy" smoke, but my wife cured me of slang several years ago. Sometime I will tell you how she did it.)

"He told me."

My wife said it so calmly that I did not detect the fact that she was on the verge of tears.

"How long has he been smoking?" I asked, because the Boy had virtually promised me that he would not smoke until he was twenty-one, and he was only just a little over nineteen.

"I don't know, but he confessed to me this morning that he had acquired the habit at the college smoker, and that nearly every student in his class smoked."

"Cigarettes?" I asked, getting angrier every minute.

"A pipe!" my wife said, and with the word she suddenly broke down and began to weep.

My wife cries so seldom that I almost felt as if the end of the world had come. I tried to comfort her, and said a number of foolish things such as the average man says to his wife when he doesn't know just what to say to her. But in spite of all I could think of, she seemed quite depressed.

"I feel so disappointed," she said as she finally wiped her tears away. "I did so want him to keep from this habit. And he knows how I feel. Yet it does not seem to make any difference."

"Wait till he gets home. I'll have it out with him!" I said, perhaps a little sternly. For at that, his mother spoke up as if alarmed.

"Don't be too severe on him. I'm sure he wants to please us generally."

"Oh, well, I won't overdo it. But I don't like the habit and I don't want him to contract it."

"Perhaps,"—my wife said timidly, and then stopped.

"Perhaps what?" I asked as I picked up my book again.

But my wife did not say what, and it was only after she went up-stairs and I stayed below to wait up for the Boy that I thought I knew what she meant. I kept thinking it over as I read the detective story, until finally I threw the book down on the table, out of patience with it because it seemed to me that any one could write a better story without half trying. And so I sat there until the Boy came in, a little late, for the younger ones had returned from their school entertainment some time before and had gone up-stairs. So the Boy and I had it out all alone.

"Good-night, father," he said as he started straight for the stairs after hanging up his hat in the hall.

"Wait a minute," I said. "I want to have a little talk with you."

He looked scared at that, but he came in and sat down by the table. I kept trying to remember what his mother had said about not being too severe with him, but I expect I seemed rather stern to the Boy, for acting on a habit I have, I came straight to the subject.

"I understand you have taken to smoking. Didn't you tell me you would wait until you were twenty-one before you began?"

"No, Father, I did not make a promise. I said I would try to wait. And I have tried; but what's

the use when all the fellows smoke? I don't want to be queer and unsocial. And smoking is the rule at all the college functions, at least nearly all of them."

"But you know your mother doesn't like it. She is pretty much upset by it."

"I know." The Boy seemed really concerned about that. "I told her about it. And I don't smoke very much, and not at all in my room."

"But you smoke a pipe," I said, getting a little warm over it. "Have you got it with you? Let me see it!"

He took it promptly out of his pocket and handed it over. I took it and said, before I thought, "It is just like the one I used——," and then I stopped and eyed the Boy severely, as I laid the pipe, a short and black affair, down on the table.

"Where have you been smoking tonight?" I asked, to bring the conversation back to the original subject.

"At the 'Y' smoker," the Boy said.

"Do you mean that the 'Y' has a smoker?"

"They always have one at the social meetings." And he added, "I used to be almost the only fellow at the 'Y' that did not smoke, and that's one reason I began. I don't see any great harm, Father, and besides—you——"

"Well, go on, what about me?"

"*You* smoke," the Boy said, and his look went straight as a drawn line from his eye to my upper left-hand vest pocket out of which stuck two cigars.

"But not a dirty pipe."

"But you just said you used——"

"That was years ago when I was in the University," I said without thinking. And then, before the Boy could say any more, I went on. "We won't argue the matter. Your mother does not like it, and I think it is a bad habit for you. I want you to quit right now. No more smoking."

For the first time in his life I thought the Boy looked at me sullenly and defiantly. He rose, and reached out his hand to take the pipe off the table, but I covered it with my hand.

"Leave it here," I said shortly. "We will finish this talk in the morning. Go to bed and sleep off your feeling."

The Boy went away without saying good-night, which hurt me, because it was the first time.

But after I heard him close his door, I sat by the table thinking. And the more I thought the less I thought—of myself. I began to finish that sentence, that my wife had begun when she had said so timidly "perhaps——"

I sat up pretty late that night, but when I came down-stairs next morning, after a not very sound sleep, I called the Boy into the library and asked my wife to come with him.

I laid the Boy's pipe down on the library table and then I laid the two cigars down by the side of it. And, looking at the Boy's mother as much as at him, I said, "I want to make a straight bargain with you about the smoking business."

"With me?" said my wife.

"Well, yes, with you and the Boy. I will give up smoking cigars if you will give up smoking a pipe. What do you say?"

The Boy's eyes sparkled, and he jumped to his feet.

"You don't mean it, do you, Dad?"

"I never meant anything more in my life. The habit is a bad one, and I cannot afford it."

"Then it's a bargain," said the Boy, and with the word he reached out for the pipe and threw it with all his might down into the fireplace. It was a cheap imitation briar made of some brittle stuff that went into small pieces. I shook hands with the Boy somewhat dramatically, and was about to sneak out of the room, but if I remember rightly, at that point my wife pulled my head down (she is very short, and I am very tall) and kissed me hard. "I thought, perhaps, if you would do that—" she whispered.

But only a little while after the smoke problem was disposed of satisfactorily the Boy's mother came to me with another one, and this time it *was* serious. It was another evening when we happened to be alone. I glanced up from something I was reading, and the Boy's mother was looking mighty worried.

"Do you know what the Boy has done, now?" she said.

"No, he hasn't robbed a bank, has he?"

"It's almost as bad," she said. "He's fallen in love!"

"In love!" I said just as if I had never heard the word before. "Who with?"

"Ah, that is what makes it a problem. She is one of the silly little things in college; the last girl I would have chosen for the Boy!"

"Leave them to me!" I said somewhat shortly. "He can't ruin his career over some silly girl! The idea! Why, he's only nineteen!"

"But," said my wife timidly. "You were only nineteen when we——"

"But that was different," I said decidedly. "You let me attend to the Boy."

So at the first convenient opportunity I confronted the Boy with this new problem.

"I want to talk with you about this—this girl business," I said to him one evening when we were alone.

The Boy straightened right up and looked defiant.

"This is a matter of life and death to me, Dad. You must not interfere."

"Are you engaged to her?" I asked after a pause.

"No, not yet. But we are thinking it over."

"I don't want to interfere with your affairs, but will you promise me to do certain things which are perfectly reasonable?"

The Boy hesitated a moment, but the confidence he had shown in me since the smoke problem won the day and he said, frankly, "Yes, if they are reasonable."

"Well, then, I want you honestly to do this. I

don't know this girl, but your mother seems to, and she is worried. All I want you to do is to put these things into your mind and watch. And you needn't tell me anything. Let your mother know. Be honest now. First, does this girl dress modestly at the college and elsewhere? Second, does she use slang when she talks to you and other boys? Third, does she belong to a church or Sunday school and go to them? Fourth, what kind of shows and movies does she prefer to go to? Fifth, is she willing to have you get her the most expensive candy and flowers, or does she tell you to be more economical out of your allowance?"

I thought at first the Boy was going to explode. But he seemed to pull himself together, and held out his hand to meet mine.

"It's a bargain?"

"Yes, Dad," he said, and he said it soberly.

My wife wanted to know what I had said to the Boy, but I preferred not to tell her. "You wait, and see what he says. We made a bargain and I believe he will be honest about it," I said. And being a very wise and unusual woman she did not ask me anything more.

But a few weeks after, she came to me with a smile on her face that reminded me of the time when I was nineteen myself.

"The Boy has waked up from his dream about that girl," she said. "He is disgusted with her and the engagement is impossible. He says he has discovered that she is immodest in her dress, uses slang when talking to boys, never goes to Sunday

school and seldom to church, prefers movies that are exciting and sometimes questionable, and never remonstrates with him for buying expensive flowers and candy from his pocket allowance. He says he is done with her, and you can't imagine how happy I am. What a tragedy if such a girl had come into our family!"

"Yes, indeed!" I said humbly.

"I wonder what you said to the Boy," my wife suddenly said.

"Yes, I wonder."

"As for me," she said, "I don't know what you said to the Boy. But I prayed that he might not make the mistake of his life. And my prayer was answered."

And I have been wondering ever since, whether I had anything to do with solving the Boy Problem after all? For I am only a Mere Man. But his Mother——

III

THE OLDER BOY DONS HIS THINKING CAP

I THOUGHT when the Boy's first love affair was settled satisfactorily to his mother that my problems, so far as he was concerned, were over for a while. But it seems that they were only just begun.

I had settled down to my detective stories again, and was getting to the point where the blood stain on the library rug was found to be only some red raspberry jam spilled there by one of the children in the haunted house, when, one evening, just as I had picked up the story to go on from that point, the Boy came down from his room with a pile of books under his arm. His mother was upstairs and the other Boy and the Girl were out somewhere. I looked up from my book and said, "Going to the library?" (He had been going up there to use reference books and this was one of his nights.)

"Yes, but I wonder if you have time to answer a question?"

At first I felt irritated, anticipating some puzzle or other in philosophy or psychology, in which realms I don't come out very strong; but the Boy had a real look of anxiety on his face and I said, "Sure. Sit down. Let's have it."

He looked at me a little doubtfully (I suppose my invitation hadn't been very hearty), but he sat down and looked so wistful and troubled that I began to feel some uneasy, and I closed my book and laid it down on the table.

"It's about John," he said rather vaguely.

"John? John who?"

"The Gospel of John."

"Yes? Well—go on. What about it?"

"Dr. Strong (he is the Boy's teacher in Sociology) says that John's Gospel was never written by John, and that whoever did write it has not given us a true picture of Jesus. And he says——"

"Hold on. Let me get this straight. Do you mean that one of your teachers in the college is teaching his class that one of the Gospel writers has given us an untrue story of Jesus?"

The Boy looked at me as if he pitied my ignorance.

"Sure. It's the modern way of studying the Bible. But the thing that is puzzling me right now is that what Professor Strong says is contradicted by our minister. Last Sunday morning you were not at church——"

(I remembered at that point that I had stayed at home to polish up my golf sticks and finish the morning paper. I don't often do that, but once in a while I get so nervous over my business that I can't go to church, and a lot of other church members in our town are getting into the same way.)

"Yes, I remember. Well—go on."

"Well, in his sermon Dr. Wright"—that is our

minister's name—"said that there was a controversy going on over the authorship of John's Gospel, and he wanted to set some things right. And then he went on to contradict some of the very points that the professor made to us in denying John's authorship and his picture of Jesus, which the professor says do not agree with Matthew or Mark or Luke."

"Well?" I said as the Boy paused.

"The thing that troubles me is which one of these two to believe. Dr. Wright is a good scholar and a very careful student, and our professor is a graduate of one of the great German universities, and has written a lot of books. Which one of these two men shall I believe when they contradict each other?"

"Why"—I started to answer the Boy, and then I found I really did not know what to say. I am only a Mere Man. My business is very pressing and I have never paid any attention to theological or Biblical discussions. I have the greatest respect for all scholars, and our minister is a man I have always trusted to say the right thing; and when he pronounces words in the pulpit different from the way we do it at home, I let it go without question, as I know he has looked it up in the dictionary and I haven't. But the question the Boy put to me now was one I didn't feel qualified to answer off the brain at once. So I said again, "Why——" and stopped there.

"Well," said the Boy, "which one of these men am I going to believe?" If John did not write

John's Gospel, who did write it? If his story of Jesus is not true, how can I believe what the other Gospels say about Jesus? Professor Strong says modern scholarship takes the view that John's Gospel cannot be depended on to tell us the real character of Jesus. But Dr. Wright last Sunday said that some of the best scholars in this country and in Europe defend John's Gospel as being the spiritual outline of Jesus' character."

I could see that the matter was really troubling the Boy, and I could also see that I did not have the right answer for his question, because I did not know enough about all the discussion that was going on.

So I said to him: "You have got me going on a subject that I shall have to post up on. Give me a little time. Meanwhile, don't throw away your faith in the Gospel of John just because a man who has graduated from a German university tells you certain things. Hold on to the Gospel and don't make a snap judgment."

The Boy went away up to the library, with a curious look in his eye that I interpreted as somewhat more or less of distrust of his Dad's ability to tackle the subject. But he looked also somewhat relieved, as if the matter was not all one-sided.

Now, I may as well say that while I am a Mere Man, and have been engrossed in business because I have had to earn a decent living for my family, I have always considered my brains as fairly well built to understand everyday affairs, even if they do not come under the head of dollars. So I set

myself to find a reasonable answer to the Boy's problem, without too much fear of college professors or of German universities.

The first thing I did was to get from our minister a list of the best books about John's Gospel. He was greatly pleased to lend me all he had, and gave me a list that happened to be in our town library. I set myself to read up on the history of the Gospel, and before I knew it, I found that detective stories are not in it with the wonderful story that John tells. I soon found out the secret of skipping in the right places, and I believe I really got down to the meat of the subject after carving away some of the big bones, and then I went to our minister and had a good long conference with him.

And do you know that, right here, I found one of the most satisfactory experiences of my life? I found that a real study of the Gospels was as interesting as making money. Our minister laid himself out to help me. And I added several degrees to my respect for him as a scholar and a gentleman.

I want to say right here also, that, as I went on, I kept reproaching myself that I had not kept more in touch with the Boy's studies in college. I had been so busy making money that I really did not know, when he came to me with that question, whether he was taking a course in astronomy or bookkeeping. The whole thing which he had opened up made me ashamed to think that I had turned him loose in the pastures of knowledge without knowing whether it grew more thistles or weeds than grass. Only if it had been an old horse

or a cow, I would have gone out to the pasture once in a while to see how it looked. So I asked the Boy, one day when I was getting pretty near through the evidence on the minister's side, if it would be possible for me to come into the professor's class-room and hear what he had to say.

The Boy was a little doubtful, as visitors in college classes were rare. He couldn't remember when any of the fellows' fathers or mothers had ever been into the college, except when the fellows were graduated, and they saw the finished product. But after a little hesitation, he finally said that there was no rule against visitors that he knew of, so one day I went in with the class (took half a day off from business to do it), and I happened at an hour when the professor was going over a review of his arguments on the John matter.

He did not notice me, as the class is a large one and I sat in a back seat, and he is short-sighted, and absent-minded. I sat there and heard him pull John's Gospel to pieces, without putting it together again. But when the class was dismissed, I went up and introduced myself.

He came out of his absent-mindedness and seemed to be a little confused. I came point-blank to the subject, which is a habit in our family, and asked a few questions, quoting our minister quite liberally. The professor, I am sorry to say, got quite angry at some statements the minister made, as I quoted them. He said the statements were not warranted by the best scholarship. I have a pretty good memory, and I quoted a list of writers I had

received from the minister who contradicted the professor, and said that John's Gospel was authentic history. And at that point he refused to discuss any farther, saying he had another class, and I came away.

But a few evenings later, when the Boy came in from the library quite late, and I was alone in the sitting-room, I ventured to ask him if he had settled the matter of John's Gospel and the conflicting authorities about it.

"No, I haven't. Honestly, Father," he said, "I don't see how the two views can be reconciled!"

"Then where is your mind going to rest?"

"I don't think it will. I'll just hang the matter up in the air and leave it unsettled."

"But that is not the way to treat a matter of such importance as this. It is either the act of a coward or a slack and lazy mind."

"Well," the Boy said, somewhat doggedly, "what shall I do? Believe my professor or my minister?"

"Believe the one who presents the best evidence. Why should you believe the teaching of a professor who has filled his mind with German philosophy and higher criticism, and throw away the teaching of a minister who has gone into this matter with just as much keenness of mind and scholarship? After looking into the whole business and having long talks with our minister, I am convinced that John's Gospel contains as true a picture of Jesus as Matthew or Mark or Luke's Gospel. Each writer saw the Jesus that impressed him. Each writer has

given the world the picture of the Master that appealed to his own heart and mind. If four men wrote the life of Abraham Lincoln, you would have four different looks at him, and each one would be true. And when it comes to scholarly authorities for the truth of John's Gospel——”

At this point I reeled off a list of names that made the Boy's eyes open. I think he had an idea that his Dad was such a mere moneymaker that he hadn't brains for anything else. And I think from that time on he looked with more or less added respect over the dinner table at me.

It was late when he went upstairs to his room that night, and he seemed more satisfied in his mind than I thought perhaps he would be. The whole incident opened my eyes, not only to the Boy's problem, but to my own. I have taken to reading my New Testament lately, and I don't miss the detective stories so very much.

The Boy's attitude toward the questions which had been raised was not settled finally by our conversation, but I think I really helped him along the right track. He is still wrestling over his philosophy and his theology, and he will have to work it out for himself if the answer is going to become a part of his own convictions and exercise a real influence on his life. All the fathers in the world can't do his thinking for him, which is a good thing for him and saves much wear for a father. But he is honestly and sincerely working toward the answer, not dodging the issue and I'm sure he will come out all right.

IV

THE OLDER BOY AND HIS CAREER

I HAD an idea that after the Boy had faced the Problem of the Tobacco, and the Girl, and the Bible as taught by the scientific method, that he wouldn't trouble me for awhile. And that is right where I made another mistake. I ought not to have spoken of these problems as a "trouble," for I was beginning to find out that the Boy was passing through the same experience that I had when I was young. But, like a good many fathers in this glorious republic, I was in danger of forgetting it, and treating his problems as troubles, instead of opportunities to get nearer to him.

And may I say right here—because I have had it intimated to me in that no boy in love with a giddy young thing like the one his mother was so afraid of, would ever have done what I asked him to do—that both his mother and I decided afterwards that the Boy was not really very much in love. That was the reason that the tests I asked him to apply were possible. But that is an aside.

What the Boy brought to me a few weeks later was of a far different character, as you will see when I tell you about it. I don't think I am very

good at narrative, so I will give you the conversation the Boy and I had over the matter one evening when we were alone. This time it was in his own room into which he invited me. That had not happened very often, so I took it as a compliment, which it really was.

"I don't want to keep troubling you with my problems all the time, Dad," he said, "but I wish you would tell me what I ought to do."

"What you ought to do?" I said. "You are not in——"

"No," he said, colouring up a little. "Nothing to do with that. What I want is some advice about my life-work."

"Oh!" I said, as if the Boy's having any life-work was a strange idea for him to entertain. "Well——"

"You see, I graduate next June and I don't seem to know just what I ought to do."

Now I had given this matter almost no thought, except to take for granted without ever having talked to the Boy about it, that he would go into the store and take up the business I was in.

"I supposed you would come into the store with me."

"No!" he said very positively. "I hate business!"

Well, do you know, that just about knocked me over. The idea of any one in the family hating the business that made us our bread and butter—especially butter, considering the market price—was an idea that I had never entertained. And at

first I was inclined to say to the Boy, "What's good enough for your Dad is good enough for you!"

But on second thought, I began to think perhaps the Boy had a little right to choose what he would do in this world, so I waited.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Dad. But I just can't think of business. It doesn't appeal to me in the least."

"Well!" I replied, I am afraid a little sharply, "what *do* you want to do? Open a barber-shop?"

He stiffened up at that, and I was afraid the incident of his having a problem of doing something was going to be closed, so far as taking me into his confidence was concerned. But he choked down something, and turned such a wistful look on me, that I felt like kicking myself for a selfish old father.

"No," I said, "I didn't mean that. Tell me what other occupations or professions you don't like. Let's get at the matter by elimination. Tell me what else you hate or don't like and then perhaps we can find out what your likings are."

At that he brightened up.

"Well, cut out politics."

I gulped a little at that, for I am a good member—never mind what party.

"And I don't care for journalism or law."

"Same here. Specially the fellows that drew up the income-tax law," I said with some feeling.

"And I never had any leaning toward farming or architecture or engineering."

"Nor I," I said to encourage him, as he seemed to hesitate over the list of "eliminations."

"And I don't think I am fitted to teach in any special department. I am horribly afraid of showing my ignorance."

"I would be, too," I murmured.

"And I don't care to open a barber-shop," he said with something like a grin.

"No. Cut that out. Shave it off the list."

"And I never cared for art or music. You know I can't carry a tune more than a yard without fainting away."

"Or causing others to do so," I replied, remembering the anguish of the family once when the Boy bought a cornet and practised on it in his room.

"Yes," the Boy smiled in his wistful way. "And I never wanted to be a painter."

"Yes, I remember. That time you balked over the proposal I made to you and the other boy that you paint the kitchen floor, and save a big bill."

"But I did paint it, after all," he said a little reproachfully.

"Yes, I remember you did. And we couldn't walk over it for a week without sticking down to it, you put so much glue into it instead of turpentine," I said.

"We will eliminate painting," the Boy said, going on hastily. "And I don't like railroading or banking or the insurance business."

"Well," I said, perhaps a little shortly, "is that all?"

"It's all I think of right now."

"Then I don't see that you have much of anything left to choose except the ministry or moving pictures."

At that, the Boy looked at me so strangely that I felt rebuked at my levity.

"Of course," I said hastily, "the ministry is out of the question."

He didn't reply at once. Then he said: "Or the movies."

"It's up to you," I said, using a slang phrase I had more than once corrected him for.

"Yes, I guess it is. You can't help me, can you, Dad?"

"Well, I'm willing to help you. But I can't choose your life-work. You will have to do that yourself. I don't mind saying I *am* disappointed that you don't want to come into the store. Your Mother and I have almost taken it for granted that some time you would."

"I can't do it, Dad. I'd like to, just to please you. But I feel as if I ought to do something else."

"I'm sorry. But you must decide it. I stand ready to help you in any way I can. Have you talked with your Mother?"

"Not lately."

"She is very wise, your Mother is," I said somewhat vaguely. And as the Boy seemed to be at an end of the interview I went away, somewhat disappointed over the way the thing ended. We had not settled anything, and I did not see any farther into the Boy's life-work than he did, apparently.

It was about a week after that unsatisfactory

talk, that the college Y. M. C. A. started some special meetings, and a returned missionary from China was one of the speakers. It seems that he was retained by the "Y" to stay for several days to hold conferences with the students about life-work problems.

Something of the character of the meetings drifted across the table at meal-times, but nothing very definite, and the Boy, I remembered afterwards, was more serious-looking than I had ever noticed him. But one evening, just after the close of these meetings, the Boy came into the library where I was reading, and as he sat down I couldn't help seeing the real look of resolve in his face. He is handsome, the Boy is, and I don't wonder that people like him and sometimes fall in love with him.

"Dad," he said, coming to the point at once, as is the habit with the whole family, "I have decided to be a medical missionary."

You could have knocked me down with a feather.
 "A med——"

"Yes, a medical missionary to China. Medicine was one of the things we did not 'eliminate' when we went over the list. I have had a leaning towards medicine for some time. I like to help people in pain. I felt fascinated when, last summer, we went into the operating room at Augustana hospital and saw Dr. Ochsner do those wonderful things."

"Well," I said. "But you said 'medical *missions*.' That will mean going as a missionary."

"Yes," said the Boy, and his face fairly gleamed.
 "Dr. Stuart" (that was the name of the mission-

ary from China who had been holding the conferences at the college) "was a wonderful man! The opportunities for service in China are simply tremendous. I feel as if I had a real call to go."

I must confess that at first I sat there bewildered. The idea that any one in our family would ever choose to be a missionary, even a medical one, had never entered my head. All my folks had always gone into business. I was still thinking it seemed queer, when the Boy's mother came downstairs and joined us in the library.

I must have looked somewhat dazed, for the Boy's mother came up to me, and, with a tear glistening in her eye, she said, as she leaned over and put her face on my cheek: "Yes, the Boy has told me. Isn't it grand to think that he has chosen to be a missionary? What a wonderful life he will have!"

"Yes," I said somewhat feebly, for I was still bewildered. "Wonderful!"

"I had to choose between the ministry and the movies, Dad. You don't feel disappointed, do you!"

"Disappointed! Well——" I put out my hand and the Boy put out his. I couldn't say anything more at the time, I was so upset. But after the Boy went upstairs to his room, my wife said, her face shining with a tender light I had seen on it only a few times, "I have been praying for this, a long, long time."

And now the whole family has a growing pride that we are to be represented over in China. I

found myself saying to my junior partner the other day: "My Boy is going to help shape the future Republic of China. Great business!"

He stared at me as if I was a little "off." But I understand that is what medical missionaries have to be: Statesmen of the highest order. *And the Boy said he had no use for politics!*

V

THE YOUNGER BOY

YOU will remember, perhaps, that my family consists of my wife and three children, a boy taking a college course, a younger boy and a girl in High School, and all of them living at home.

I think I said that we all belong to the church and the Sunday school, and that I have a comfortable business which keeps me fairly busy to make my income of thirty-five hundred dollars a year.

I should have said—but perhaps you have already found it out—that up to the time I began to make these confessions, I was so busy making a living that I had let my wife, who is a person of great wisdom and good judgment, do most of the bringing up of the children. But a number of things had occurred to make me think that the father had something to do as well as the mother in training children in the home, and two matters that had to do with the Younger Boy, emphasised this fact again with me. Thinking that a good many fathers probably face the same problems with their young boys, I am telling about these two incidents, and perhaps it may help you as it helped me, as well as the boy.

His name, by the way, is John, which is an easy name to speak and spell and write. He has his own room, as each one of the children has, and I seldom go into it, except once in a while to see if he is keeping good his promise to his mother to keep everything neat. But the other morning as I was going down the hall, his door was open and I stepped in just to give a look around, and I was pleased to notice that everything seemed to be all right. The boy is athletic and I couldn't help seeing the display of tennis rackets and Indian clubs and boxing gloves and baseball bats scattered around, not in slovenly fashion, but neatly arranged on the wall and by his desk.

I was going out, with a feeling of pride in the boy's evident good faith with his mother, when I saw on the top of his desk an advertisement of a moving picture show. It was so large and conspicuous that it caught my eye and I went up closer to read it, and this is what I read :

“ AT THE DIANA THEATER! TODAY, FRIDAY
AND SATURDAY! COME EARLY.

“ NOT FOR LITTLE CHILDREN.

“ ‘ LET US HAVE WINE, WOMEN, MIRTH
AND LAUGHTER ;’

SERMONS AND SODA WATER THE DAY
AFTER.”—*Byron*.

“ On his twenty-first birthday the IMP went on a wild tear.

“ He sowed his wild oats in one wild night.

“ Come and see how he did it.

"Passion ruled.

"If you haven't reached twenty-one, here's a surprise, a thrill and a jolt. A night of passion! Come early!"

There was some more, but what I read was enough to give me a "jolt" if not a "thrill." There was a picture with the advertisement, of such a character that I knew if John's mother saw it she would sink on her knees at the Boy's bedside and pray to her good God to save him from shame. So I took the advertisement off the desk and put it in my pocket, and as I went down town to my thirty-five hundred dollar business, I am ready to confess to you that I was angry, so angry and disturbed at what I had found in the Younger Boy's room that I made several mistakes in adding up some important figures on the adding-machine.

And as I left the store and started for home I was not settled in my mind as to the best way to meet this problem, and thought at first I would pass it on to my wife. Then I felt ashamed to do that, for it was what I had been doing all my life up to this time, and it was beginning to look rather cowardly and weak on my part. So after supper, just as John was getting ready to go out—"somewhere," he had rather vaguely said—I asked him to come upstairs with me to my den, a small room off the hall where I used to go for an after-supper smoke before I stopped in the bargain which I had made with the Older Boy. I use the den now

to read in and do not miss my cigars half so much as I was afraid I was going to.

I asked the Boy to sit down, and then, coming at once to the point, I took out the "movie" advertisement and handed it over to him and said:

"Is this what you were going to tonight, when you said you were going 'somewhere'?"

He grew very red, but answered promptly, "Yes, sir."

"Don't you know that is no decent kind of a show to go to?" I said, losing my temper and speaking pretty loud.

"Everybody goes. The best people go."

"What 'best' people?"

"All of them."

"Name some."

And the Boy did what I asked. And he named about a third of all the church members, it seemed to me.

"Do any of them ever go out when they see a picture like that?" I asked, pointing to the advertisement.

The Boy grew very red again, but with a laugh that would almost have broken his Mother's heart if she had heard it, he answered, "I never saw them."

"Have you been going to these shows right along when we supposed you were at the High School gym, or at the library?" I said, and I must have spoken and looked rather stern, for the Boy's face went white.

"Yes," he said in a low tone, and I was glad he had not lied to me.

"What would your Mother say?"

At that he looked really distressed, but after a moment he looked up and said, "If the show is so bad, why do the best people keep going?"

I confess the Boy's question was not easy to answer. I did not try. As a matter of fact, I am one of a few men in my town who don't care for moving pictures, and I had not really known much about the character of them until this incident revealed them. The fact that the Boy had been going right along, when we thought he was attending to his high school athletics or his studies, was a very disturbing thing to me, and I knew his mother would break her heart over it. But while I was brooding over it, the Boy said rather lightly, I thought, for one who had been found out in a deception:

"Why don't you go to the show, Father, and see if it is as bad as you think? Sometimes the advertisements are not like the pictures inside."

It sounded like a challenge, and I rose right up and said, "We'll go right down."

We went downstairs, and I said to my wife, "I'm going out with John for a while."

She seldom asks any questions when I speak like that, only she did look surprised, as she said, "Will you be out late?"

"I think not," I said, and then, somewhat to my surprise, for John is not a demonstrative boy, he

went up to his Mother and put his arm about her neck and kissed her.

She looked pleased at that, and the picture that followed me clear into the picture house was the picture of my wife's look as she returned the Boy's kiss and said, "You will be in good company with your Father."

When we went into the theatre we found it nearly full, and by the time the lights were turned down every seat was occupied. Before that, I had time to look around and check up on the Boy's statement that the best people went. I could see any number of our church folks, and three or four ministers.

There was a series of educational and travel views that were very instructive and interesting. I found myself looking at them with real interest. Then the story of the "imp" came along.

I am not exaggerating when I say that some of the scenes in this picture were simply horrible in their vulgarity and suggestiveness. I had noticed that before the pictures were shown there had been a sentence thrown on the screen saying that it had been passed by the State Board of Censors. I could not help wondering, after seeing a few of the scenes, what kind of pictures would have been censored by the Board?

Well, the longer I sat there and saw things that burned into my memory like hot coals, and thought of the times my Boy and thousands of other boys and girls all over America had seen such pictures, the more indignant I grew, and I began to look

around, to see if anyone was going to get up and remonstrate or object. But everyone seemed to be getting the advertised "jolts" and "thrills," and quite pleased with them.

But suddenly the whole thing seemed to me to be so horrible that I took the Boy by the arm and said out loud, so loud that several people looked around in surprise, "Let us get out of here!"

We walked over several people's feet to get out, at least I did, and when we reached the lobby, I asked one of the doorkeepers where the manager was.

He told me to go up into the operator's room. I did so and found the manager, and told him why I was leaving.

He looked very much surprised, when I told him I did not consider his show a decent thing to look at.

"Is any one else going out?" he said.

"Not that I know of. But I am."

"Sorry," he said. "But the best people are here. This is what they like. It crowds the house."

I couldn't think of anything else to say and went down into the lobby and joined the Boy, who had waited for me.

We did not talk much on the way home. Only, once the Boy said, "Are you going to tell Mother?"

"Yes, I am," I answered somewhat shortly, for I still felt indignant at what I had seen.

So when we came into the house, and my wife asked if we had had a good time? After express-

ing her surprise to see us back so soon, I told her the entire story.

The thing that cut her the most was John's deceiving us. He broke down over that, and got down on his knees and begged his Mother's forgiveness. And I shall never forget the look on her face when she stroked the Boy's head, and whispered something to him that I did not hear. And he said something to her which I did not hear.

After he had gone upstairs, my wife and I had a long talk over the matter. She was much distressed over it.

But when we left off discussing the matter, there was a smile on my wife's face, and I ventured to ask her,

"What did John say to you just now?"

"He said he did want to please me. And he promised me not to go to the picture show without telling either you or me, and would not go at all, if we objected, as we shall, to such pictures. Besides, he said spring was here and he would much rather give the time to tennis in the long evenings."

That pleased me greatly.

"You must get interested in the Boy's outdoor life," my wife said a little timidly. "Don't you think you could go with him once in a while over to the tennis——"

She stopped right there as she sometimes does, without finishing, and her hint led to another interesting experience I had with the Boy, which I shall

have to tell you. But I have thought several times since that night at the show, that the Boy made that promise about the shows to his Mother. I wonder why he didn't make it to me. Come to think of it, I don't wonder much, after all.

VI

THE YOUNGER BOY AND HIS AMUSEMENTS

IN talking over these rather intimate problems of my family life, I hope no one who may be reading the account will think that I am reciting the egotistic settling of difficult questions in the home once and for all. I am not trying so much to boast of how a Mere Man *solved* problems, as to tell you how he met them. It is one thing to meet or entertain a problem and another to actually solve it.

Take, for example, the trouble the Older Boy is having over the evidence for and against the different propositions made to him by his professor and his minister. That problem is in the process of being solved. I think I really helped the Boy along the right track. But he is still wrestling over his philosophy and his theology, and he will have to work it out himself if the answer is going to become a part of his own convictions.

In the same way, the Younger Boy is wrestling with his temptations over the movies, and having some struggle to keep the promise he made his Mother not to go without asking for consent, or telling her that he was going. The habit of deception, we hoped, had disappeared, for which we

were very thankful. But we can see that he is still restless when night comes and he wants to go somewhere. Two or three times my wife and I have gone to a picture show with him, when it looked from the advertisements that the film was fairly decent. But two out of the three films were so silly and even vulgar that we could hardly sit through the hour and a half. The Boy confessed, himself, after we reached home that the pictures were "no account," and perhaps that statement reconciled his Mother to the suffering she endured in looking at them.

But the spring days were coming on and John was getting more and more interested in outdoor sports, as I think I told you he was athletically inclined and was a tennis player and a member of the High School basket-ball team. His Mother used to express some fear of his getting hurt at basket-ball, but I remembered what she said to me about going out with the Boy to his tennis, and one afternoon I closed down my desk early and went out to the High School ball-ground to see the Boy in a match tennis game with some players from the Freshman class in the Older Boy's college.

The game was a close one, and as I watched it I grew more and more interested as I recalled my own college days and the fact that I used to be a pretty good player myself, and in fact I had carried off the university championship one year. But I have a horror of the man who is always harking back to his achievements in college, and so I seldom mentioned my athletic feats, and indeed I doubt if

either my wife or the children had ever heard me mention the old university triumphs except, perhaps, when I may have somewhat incidentally spoken of some big event like an intercollegiate track meet and compared my own college days with the modern ones.

But as I sat there that afternoon watching the young fellows make their strokes, an idea came to me that may seem to you somewhat fantastic, and perhaps impossible, but I will leave it to you to say what you like, after I relate how the thing came out.

John was playing a good game, but his opponent was too strong for him, and the games ended 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 in favour of the other boy. The two players came up to the net and shook hands in the regular fashion, but as I walked home with John I could not help noticing that he took his defeat rather hard, and he seemed specially anxious over a series of games in which he was listed to play during the school commencement week where the honour of winning was considered very great, and I could see that he was afraid he might disappoint the school, which was reckoning on his playing as the best player out of a larger number who had tried out for position.

I did not say much to him, only to compliment him on the fine rally he had made in the deuce set, as I was thinking over the plan I had in mind, but I noticed all through the evening meal that the Boy felt sore over the defeat of the afternoon, and he was not at all sociable and chatty as his general habit is.

Now I do not call myself an old man, even if I am married and the father of three pretty well grown-up-children. And, if I do say it, I have taken very good care of my body, going on the principle that it is the only one I have and needs to be well looked after. I am a member of a golf club, and also of the volley ball team of business men at the Y. M. C. A. gym, and I have kept up my practice of vigorous exercises regularly, and don't feel at all like taking a back seat, not even to the so-called young crowd.

The weather was getting fine for golf, so I planned every afternoon when the business would permit, to go to the grounds. But the day after the Boy met his defeat at tennis, instead of playing golf out at the club, I went on the tennis courts. We have a number of courts at the club, and they are kept in fine condition. A few of the club members are tennis fans, and play that game, mostly, instead of golf. So I had no difficulty in getting up a match with one of the best players among the older young men. The first day he beat me in a close contest. But I challenged him to another, and beat him.

Gradually as the days went by and I grew accustomed to the stroke, I managed to get back some of my old-time form, and one after another I beat the club players. Sometimes we would have quite an audience to see the play. And for two weeks I kept up the practice, training for wind and certainty and using the old strokes that I had found effective, although I had to confess that some of

the younger men had a knack of twisting the ball over in an awkward back spin that I could not return, until near the end of the second week I learned to take them on the volley close up to the net, instead of playing back, as my habit had been.

It was one day after I had been playing continuously for over two weeks that I said to John, just as he was starting off to school: "By the way, son, how are you coming on with the tennis? The commencement match comes off before long, doesn't it?"

He coloured up and said somewhat doubtfully: "I don't get the practice I need. The courts are filled every evening when I come out, and I have to wait my turn. My classes are not at the right time."

"How would you like to practice out at the golf club courts?"

He looked surprised.

"I'm not a member."

"No, but I am, and I can take you over as a guest."

He brightened up at that, because he knew from report what fine grounds we had.

"But who will play with me?"

"I will."

He laughed. "What practice will I get with you?" he answered. "I need to play with a better player than I am, myself, in order to get any good out of it."

I didn't say anything, much, only to tell him that I would give him as good a game as I knew how.

He seemed pleased at the opportunity to go out, and the next day we went together and found one of the best courts unoccupied.

I thought it only fair to say to him after we had tossed up for position and service, that I used to play a pretty good game in college. I noticed the rather sceptical grin on the Boy's face as I said it, and I went back to the base line to serve, as I had won the toss and chosen service, leaving him the advantage of the sun and the wind.

I thought I might as well begin on him at my best, so I served him a twister that hit the ground in the extreme right-hand corner of his court, and went off at a sharp angle with almost no bound at all. It was so baffling to him that I won the game, 40-love.

I shall never forget the look on the Boy's face as he picked up the balls and went back to his corner to serve to me. It was such a mingling of respect and astonishment that I wanted to laugh, but was afraid it would hurt his feelings, so I looked very grave as I returned his first ball with a Lawford spin that just grazed the top of the net and hit the ground almost on the back line.

I won't try to describe the set we played, but it is enough to say that the score was 6-3 in my favour. As we changed sides of the net, John said, "I didn't know I was playing with a professional." He looked very queer and I could see that a new feeling towards his Father had come to him inside of the time it took to play that first set.

He beat me the second set, 6-4. But the next was

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a deuce set. I thought it might almost break his heart to lose it, but on the other hand I had an end in view, and I finished up the game by calling into use a stroke of back-handed downward volley that I had learned from Larned. He could not possibly return it, and the game and set went to me, 7-5.

On the way home John said very little. But at the supper table he let himself out to the family in praise of his Dad. If I had been elected President I doubt if the Boy could have had more respect for me. He was a hero-worshipper, and the idea that I had beat him on his own boasted ground of athletics appealed to his boyish imagination. I found that I had a place in his respect that he had never paid me before, and it gave me an influence with him that I found I needed as other events came on.

It was a few Sundays after that game that my wife came home from church with a troubled look that made me ask her what caused it. I had not been to church that Sunday for some reason; too tired, or too much Sunday paper, I think. But the minute my wife came in I saw that she was very much disturbed.

"Mrs. Thompson" (she is our next-door neighbour) "came to me after church and said her boy and our John spent the Sunday-school hour in the drug-store this morning," she began. "He is in the down-stairs room, you know, and my class meets in the church, so I did not know John was not in his class. Oh, I feel so bad about it! He is deceiving us again!"

The drug-store in our neighbourhood is the com-

mon meeting place of the "gang," and I knew at once what my wife felt as she thought of the Boy spending the Sunday-school hour there.

"Was he at church?" I asked, my anger rising.

"Oh, yes. He sat with me as always. That is why I supposed he had been in his Sunday-school class."

"Where is he now?"

"He is coming along. He came out of church with some of the boys and was behind me."

"He can't go on this way!" I said, sternly.

"He promised not to deceive us in the matter of the movies, and now he is doing it in the matter of his Sunday-school. It must be stopped!"

"You have great influence with him. Oh, use it wisely, won't you? I am praying for him. But you can use your influence with him at a critical time. Be wise, won't you!"

I promised my wife that I would, but I confess I felt a good deal upset by the Boy's conduct. In a few minutes he came in. His Mother had gone out into the kitchen to get dinner.

"Come up to the den," I said shortly.

He knew in a minute what the trouble was. But there was a look of sullen opposition on his face that I did not like, as he sat there in the den facing me. It was a very important conference which we held and it had very important bearing on several lives. It was so important that I shall have to ask you to wait until the next chapter to tell you how it came out. Meanwhile, I hope you will not forget the Boy's Mother was praying.

VII

THE YOUNGER BOY BALKS AT SUNDAY-SCHOOL

IF there is anything I have always despised in a business man it has been deceit of any kind, misrepresentation of goods or exaggeration in advertising so as to throw a would-be buyer off his guard, or little tricks of evasion that skim the edges of the exact truth.

So it came to me with a good deal of keenness of feeling that my own Boy had been guilty of deception in the matter of his Sunday-school attendance, especially as he had recently had one lesson in the matter of the movies. And I confess to a real rising of anger as the Boy confronted me in my "den," and I did not feel kindly towards him. He shrank back as I put the question to him bluntly: "How long have you been deceiving your mother and me about this Sunday-school business?"

"Not very long."

"You have been deceiving us, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"This isn't the first time?"

"No."

"Have you any excuse?"

"Not any you would accept."

"Don't you know that one of the worst habits a boy can acquire is to lie to his father and mother?"

The Boy did not answer this, only looked sullenly down at the floor, and shuffled his feet uneasily.

"Don't you?" I said with a rising inflection.

"Yes, sir."

"Don't you know that a habit like that is likely to fasten itself on you until no one will put any confidence in you, and it will ruin your chances for success?"

He did not reply to that, and I paused a moment. The boy looked very miserable and unhappy, and I began to wonder if I had really found out the reason for his deception.

"You said you had no reason for deception that I would accept. Give me any reason you may have for deceiving your mother and me."

He hesitated and I said, a little more gently: "Well, go on. It may be no reason, but I want to give you a chance to say what is on your mind."

"Well, my teacher is an old poke. He doesn't know how to make the lessons interesting. And there is so much confusion and cutting up that I don't get anything out of going to Sunday-school."

"What kind of a superintendent have you got, if he can't keep order and get teachers who are interesting?"

"I don't know anything about that," the Boy said sullenly, lapsing into his semi-defiant attitude.

"All I know is that I hate going to Sunday-school."

"But you know you ought to go, don't you?"

"I don't know why," he said, suddenly looking up.

"Why! Everyone ought to go. Where can you ever get a knowledge of the Bible, if you don't go!"

And the minute I said it, I knew I had made an opening for the Boy. Sure enough he came back at me as quick as a flash with the retort, "Why don't *you* go, then!"

Now possibly you may remember in the first of these confessions that I stated as one of the facts about our family that we all belonged to the church and Sunday-school. That statement should have been modified a little. I ought to have gone on to say that while we all did belong to the church and Sunday-school it did not mean, on my part, at least, the loyalty and devotion that church members ought to show to the institution that the Master loved and for which He gave Himself up. And after belonging to a men's Bible Class in our church for several years I had dropped out because of some small annoyance from a chronic talker who irritated me, and for some time I had established a custom of staying at home Sunday mornings while my wife and children represented the family at Sunday-school.

My wife did not approve of my habit, but one of her characteristics has been what I myself think at times is a too strong habit of deference to her husband. She can be as positive as any one could desire when it comes to obeying convictions of her own, but she has always hesitated to enforce them

on me, and there have been times when I have wished she had. It came over me with a feeling of self-reproach right at this moment that if she had insisted on my keeping my church vows as I had promised, it would have saved me from a most embarrassing situation with the Boy.

He was looking at me closely, and watching the effect of his question, and the best thing I could think of saying was: "That has nothing to do with your deception. You have been lying—that is the real word to use—to us, and the excuse you give, is, as you said, not any that I can accept. I want to talk this over with your mother. And I want you to think over the whole matter seriously. It is too bad that the Sunday-school is not more interesting. But that has nothing to do with your deception. You should have come to your mother or to me and told us about your dislike for your teacher and all the rest. Those things can be changed. But a habit of lying is so serious that it cannot be treated lightly. You can go now. But——"

To tell the truth the question the Boy had put to me about my own absence from Sunday-school had rather upset me, and made difficult any discipline I might have wished to give him in a dignified and self-respecting manner.

He went away without any sign of repentance on his face, and I talked the matter over later in the day while the children were out of the house.

"Of course, John," my wife said when I related the facts of my interview with the Boy, "we did

take a vow when we joined the Church that we would support all the church services and the Sunday-school was mentioned particularly. And I have wished many times that you had kept on with your Bible Class. The teachers are not perfect, but the Sunday-school as a whole is a wonderful help, and if you had only——”

That was as near as she usually came to a reproach for any of my shortcomings, and I felt the attack made by the boy so keenly that I blurted out, “If I had only kept my word, perhaps the Boy would not have deceived us.”

“Kept your word!” my wife said, as if shocked.

“But I did not mean——”

“No, I know you didn’t. But don’t you remember when we joined the Church, as you say, we made a vow to support it by attending its services? Strictly speaking I have not kept my word made to the minister and the Church when I joined. And as I think it over, the Boy has a pretty good case against his father, so far as deceit is concerned. For I begin to think I have deceived my minister and the Church and have not very much to boast about to the Boy.”

“But I don’t know a man anywhere who has a higher standard for truth and honesty in business. Why, John——”

“It may be I have in business. But, do you know, it seems a little queer, but I begin to think that a man’s word given to his minister and his church does not mean the same as his word given to a business acquaintance. At any rate, I can not

stand it to let the Boy get ahead of me in this matter and I think I had better keep my vow to attend the services of the church, and get back to Sunday-school."

You should have seen the look on my wife's face when I came out strong on that decision. It is a wonder to me that I don't oftener do things that please her, just to get the benefit of a look that is just glorified happiness. We talked the matter of the Boy's deception over at length, but did not arrive at any definite decision as to the right way to punish him for it, only I made clear to my wife that I felt as guilty as he in a certain sense and the first thing for me to do was to set myself right with my own convictions.

So when next Sunday came, I said at the breakfast table, so that all could hear, "We will all get ready for Sunday-school this morning, and go down together."

No one said anything, but the Boy looked rather queer. He made no objection and we all walked down. We live out in the college district, and the church is a down-town church, about a quarter of a mile from our house.

When we went in, the Superintendent was at the door welcoming people and he seemed unusually glad to see me. I went and sat down by one of my business friends who had gone in just ahead of me, and the rest of the family went to their different department rooms.

Pretty soon the Superintendent came to me and said, with some hesitation: "I feel awfully glad to

see you here. Do you think you could take a class this morning? One of my teachers is not able to be here. It's a class of boys, and they need just such a man as you to hold them."

I was all taken back and all I could say was: "Oh, no. I am not prepared to teach. I don't know the lesson."

"Well, we have a graded school, you know, and you can take the general theme that is being discussed in that department, which comes right in your line of business. It deals with the question of socialising business, and you are just the person to tell those boys what you are doing. And, by the way, your own boy is in that class. He hasn't been here for the last two Sundays. Glad to see him come in today. Oh, I wish you would take that class! It has caused me great trouble. The boys are not bad, but they are alive and ought to have the best teacher in the church."

I don't know to this day what made me decide as I did. I think it was partly because I have always hated a coward. And also I think it was because I was still feeling keenly the self-reproach of breaking my word.

At any rate I made up my mind I would try to get hold of that class of boys, and it was partly curiosity to see what the problem was, together with all the rest, that made me say "Yes" to the Superintendent.

I haven't time to tell you all my experience that Sunday morning. My firm in the city for which I have worked several years was right in the midst

of some very interesting experiments in trying to help the employees to better ideals of home life. I was really interested in the plan, and knew enough about it to hold those boys' attention while I told some of the ways the thing worked out. Perhaps it was partly because they had a new voice, and partly because I do have some good quality for teaching that they behaved all through the school hour so well that after the session the Superintendent came over and said: "Say, I wish you could take that class right along. Can't you?"

I did not promise him at the time, but it would take another account to tell the story of how I finally did take the class and have it yet, and I have become deeply interested in the Sunday-school and its plans. But before that time came along, I must say that when we came home and after we were seated at the dinner table, the Girl said, "Father, I wish you would teach our class. I heard great things about your teaching this morning."

I actually blushed. Some of it for pleasure, some for remorse. My wife looked her best. The Older Boy said nothing, and the Younger One said, speaking very low, "I wouldn't mind going to Sunday-school if father would teach."

He did not say it to me, but to his mother. She seemed to choke over something, although we were not having fish or chicken for dinner.

But only last Sunday as I sat teaching that class in our Sunday-school, I caught myself holding my breath as I met that look in my younger son's eye, fixed on his father. It seemed to me that in that

look he asked forgiveness for his deceit, which was by this time several weeks old. And when I went home, that afternoon as my wife and I were alone in the "den" a few minutes, I said to her, "We have never punished the Boy for his deception in not attending Sunday-school."

"I have been praying we might have wisdom to do what was wise," she said.

"And I am inclined to think, my dear," I said, "that your prayers have been answered."

And we are leaving the matter right there. I may as well say that I am trying to do my part as a good father ought, making many mistakes as I go along. But when it comes to the prayers of my wife for the children, I cannot help thinking, after all, that the wisdom which is from above is far above our wisdom and our foolishness.

VIII

THE AUTOMOBILE QUESTION CROPS UP

I DON'T pretend to be any better financial manager than other Mere Men of my size in this town, but I do think I have managed pretty well to bring up a family of five, send one to college, keep all of them decently well clothed and more than fairly well fed and housed, and save a little money, all on an income of about thirty-five hundred dollars a year, a good slice of which has been paid out for old debts and one unfortunate oil investment. I will not say just how much I have in the bank at present, but it will be enough for this narrative to say that I have a little money laid by, carry a reasonable amount of insurance, and as a family we have of late years lived quite comfortably within our means, owing to the fact that we are not extravagant, and have been brought up to pretty plain living.

But a little over a year ago the Younger Boy began to raise the question, quite often, of getting an automobile. He said a good many of the boys in the High School had cars, and he did not see why we couldn't have one.

Now, I don't mind saying that the matter of buying a car had been in my own mind for some

time. Most of my business friends had cars. There were still a few like myself, who had not cared to own one, and who preferred to walk down to business for the sake of the exercise. But the great majority preferred to ride, and it was a small number of men in our town who were able to buy cars (or acted as if they were) who did not have one.

There was one other thing that made me listen to the Boy as he kept up the talk about a car, and that was the fact that I am a member of a golf club, and found the distance to the grounds by the street cars was almost a bar to my playing, as it took so long to make the trip. Once in a while a member would invite me out in his car and take me home; but it made me feel uneasy to accept such a courtesy too often, and several times I had debated with myself the problem of owning a car of my own.

"I don't see why we can't be like other folks," the Boy would say. "Everyone has a car nowadays. We are not keeping up with the times not to have one."

"What times are you talking about?" I would say, speaking with some knowledge of the subject. "Do you mean hard times? Those are the times some of the car owners are having with their cars, I gather from occasional remarks I hear from the owners."

"Well, Father," the Boy would go on, using an argument that really carried weight with me, coming as it did right after his mother's break-down,

"if we had a car, say a five-passenger" (and here the young fellow named over a catalogue list of cars that showed he had been going into the matter pretty deeply), "we could all go out, and summer is coming on and Mother would enjoy it, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I——" she said almost before she thought, as it seemed to me. "That is, I don't know that your father can afford it. They are very expensive things, cars are."

"But hospitals and doctors cost more. And you need the outdoors, and all that," he went on.

I may as well say right here that the Older Boy had not expressed himself on this subject, very much to my surprise. I don't know to this day why he had never wanted a car. I think it was because he really had an unusually large amount of plain common sense and had figured out carefully that I was not able to own and operate a car on my income, without too much expense, and he had an unusual gift for a certain kind of shrewd financiering. As for the Girl, it may seem strange to you that she had not been asking for a car long before this. But she had never asked me to buy one, and I knew her reason, one that will surprise you some when I come to mention the Girl Problem.

It was the argument (if it were an argument) of the mother's needing the outdoor life that finally decided the car matter. We had a family council, and talked the thing over from every angle. So we finally agreed on a car (I will not mention the make), which, according to the agent, combined all

the advantages and none of the defects of all the other makes. And after going through the usual experimenting and learning to drive the thing and learning the names of some of the more easy parts of the mechanism, we entered into possession of an automobile, and as the ancient language of a certain legal document has it, "into all the perquisites and appurtenances thereof." And let me say right here that as time went on the "appurtenances thereof" took on many shapes, such as "gas," "repairs," "blow-outs," "punctures," "tires," "engine-trouble," "radiator leaks," "broken-down batteries," "short circuits," "carbon cylinders," and "carburetor-needs-regulating."

But all that became prominent at a later period. At first, I am sure it is a fact that the family enjoyed the new car and we all had many happy rides together in it. I noted particularly during that period how much pleasure my wife seemed to get out of the drives we took around town and out into the country. She was too timid to try to drive the thing alone, but the Girl learned, and the two had more than one long drive together, once even to visit an old school friend in a neighbouring town.

But gradually, I can't just exactly say how the whole thing came about, some serious matters came up in connection with the car which I have learned since are quite common with many other families in town.

I don't refer specially to the expense of keeping the machine going, although as the thing got older it seemed to me it grew wonderfully liable to run

up bills of expense for a dozen different necessities. If it were not tires it was tubes. If the engine went all right, the magneto was out of order. If the spark plugs did not miss, the gas seemed to be always missing. However, I will say that the Younger Boy was willing to tinker at the different parts, and on the whole I am inclined to think he mended almost as much as he spoiled in trying.

But it was concerning his part in the automobile incident in our family that the really serious troubles arose. The cost of feeding the animal and keeping him from falling to pieces was of small account by the side of what happened in other ways.

You will remember the Boy had mentioned the fact that a number of the High School boys had cars. After getting our car I drove down-town to my business with it quite regularly, and often passed by the High School grounds on the way. One morning I counted forty-seven cars parked around the High School block. That seemed a pretty good number, considering the fact that our town has less than forty thousand population. I mentioned the number to the family one evening at meal time. But it did not seem to make any special impression. The Younger Boy grinned, and said, "Well, the cars are not used during business hours down-town. The fellows might as well have them up around the school."

I did not know all he meant, but had occasion to, as time went on.

Gradually I began to lose some of my first en-

thusiasm for the car, and the Boy seemed to want it oftener. I have always had a horror of getting too stout and fat. I found that I was missing my old walk down-town in the morning, and when my wife hinted that I showed signs of a double chin, that was the beginning of the end of my use of the car for riding to business. When the Boy had to hurry to make school, owing to a late breakfast, it seemed natural for him to jump into the car with his sister and whirl down to the High School building. In time, the car became one of the forty-seven that regularly parked around the school during school hours. The only thing that I insisted on was that my wife should have her rides when she wanted them. But I have found out since that many an afternoon when she should have been enjoying the use of the car, the Boy was off with it riding around with his schoolmates.

This sort of thing grows up by degrees. Any number of fathers and mothers could tell similar tales of automobiles in the family. And to make this story one of the tabloid variety, one evening quite late, the Boy's mother came into my den with a real look of anxiety on her face.

"John has not come in yet."

I looked at my watch. It was half-past eleven.

"He is out with the car," my wife said, and the way she said it made me realise that there was more serious matter coming.

"I'm afraid," she faltered, "that he is out with that——" (she named one of the most reckless automobile drivers in the High School)

"and—" She waited a moment and then broke down.

I waited, for it had only just begun to dawn on me what she was trying to say. But my wife is a woman of courage and I was not so very much surprised when she calmed down and said, at last, "They went by the house this afternoon and there were two girls with the boys. I couldn't tell who they were. But they are not back."

My first feeling was one of deep anger. Of course I knew, as do most American fathers whose sons drive their cars to school and college, that the young folks of this generation live lives of great freedom nowadays. But——

"I'll wait up for him," I said grimly. "He knows that the one rule I have made for him is that the car must be in by ten at the latest."

I never think back to that night without a feeling of dread. It was after half-past two o'clock in the morning when I heard the noise of the car as it came up the drive by the side of the house to go to the little garage I had built at the end of the lot. I waited until I heard the door shut, and the Boy came slowly along to the front of the house. Then I went down-stairs and opened the door.

His face was very white and I shall never forget the look of misery on it. He was crying as he came in, and his clothes were covered with grime and oil.

"We broke down way out by the river bend, Father," he said, leaning up against the door. "We had a bad blow-out, and there wasn't a house

for miles from which we could telephone. Warren and I have been working over the tires all this time to get back."

"Where are those girls!" I said, and I am frank to say I was angry all over, after waiting up all that time.

"We told them to walk back to the last house we passed, and telephone while we worked over the car. They got frightened and didn't go but part way. We took them up on our way in. They are at home."

Well, I felt some relieved over that, and yet I was so stirred up that I don't know just what I might have said if at that moment the Boy's mother hadn't come down-stairs. She had not been asleep, of course, and when she came down, the Boy, who was still leaning up against the door which he had left open, looked up for a moment, and then he did what changed my feeling toward him, and I think it had a good deal to do with what followed the next morning at our family council. He went, with a cry of real relief and as if he needed his mother's arms about him, right into them, and she held him close, as your mother has held you when you had done something you ought not, and were truly sorry for it.

I don't need to tell much of anything more about what came on next, but in the morning, at the breakfast table, according to a common custom in our family, we held a council over the whole automobile business.

The Boy was pretty serious, and for that matter

we all were. I stated the case for and against the car, and we finally agreed to adopt these rules and regulations to govern its use:

The mother to have the benefit of rides whenever the boys or the girl could take her out without interfering with their regular school duties.

Dad to use the car to get to the golf grounds, or go fishing, or take visiting friends out when it was necessary to do the friendly act.

No automobile riding with girls at night, unless the sister or mother or some of the teachers were along. This rule seemed a little hard to the Younger Boy. He said it was a rule not observed by any other family, but after his experience he was not inclined to object seriously. And besides this is not the account of some other family's way of dealing with the automobile problem, but it is ours.

The whole family to use the car as a thing of real pleasure. And as far as possible also use it to take out friends who were not able to buy cars.

I don't remember that there were any other special rules agreed on by the council, but as time has gone on, I think it is quite safe to say that the car has proved to be a real blessing to us, and from what some of the old ladies in the Old Ladies' Home say, when the Girl has run down there to take three or four of them out for an hour or two Saturday afternoons, I am sure we feel quite justified in keeping it, especially after lending its use. I hope I am not too strict in my regulations, and events as they are coming on, seem to prove to

me and to my wife that the regulations are quite sensible.

And I want to say that my wife is getting so much good out of the rides she gets, that I am very glad I did not do what I had made up my mind to do just before she came down-stairs that night at half-past two. I was just about to tell the Boy that the car would be advertised for sale before another night. But there was another way of settling the problem, and I am inclined to think that the sight of the Boy, who was truly sorry, as his mother's arms went around him, kept me from turning the garage into a chicken house. My wife can't run the car, but she surely does know how to make the wheels of this family, including the Mere Man, run straight.

IX

OUR GIRL

THIS problem is not going to be what you think. In all probability, if you have been interested so far in the various problems which have been stated as part of an *average* family, you will perhaps think of the Girl Problem in some such way as this:

Average Girl as to looks, behaviour, intelligence, and conversation. Gives her family considerable concern on account of her demands for expensive dress, her abnormal love of amusements, or her slangy familiarity with young men. If not those things, what are the problems of American girls? Some of the girls, you who are reading these confessions, do present such problems to their parents, don't they? Or, if the problems are not any of these, perhaps they are even more serious, and involve falling in love with the wrong young man, or wasting precious time in frivolous pursuits, or failing in a proper knowledge of a young woman's place in the home, or letting mother do the heavy housework in the kitchen while the piano plays jazz music in the parlour.

I remember a few nights ago my wife and I were talking with our next-door neighbours about their children, and the neighbour's wife was much con-

cerned about their girl, who was losing her interest in all religious things, didn't want to go to Sunday-school or church, and was very critical of the sermons she heard. They were troubled, both father and mother, over some remarks that had come to them from some church people, who had observed that their girl was irreverent during church service and annoyed other people by giggling and whispering, so much so that she had to be spoken to by the people who were sitting near by.

It will give you some hint, perhaps, of the kind of Girl ours is when I say that after coming home from this neighbour's I said to my wife: "We think sometimes we have troubles over our children, but just suppose we faced the things our neighbours face! After all, the Girl——"

"Yes," said my wife, "the Girl——"

We call her "the Girl," because there is only one, but you may want to know her real name. It is just Mary. I don't know a better name, and all girls who have it, will, I hope, agree with me.

Well, we are not getting on very fast with the Girl Problem, and one reason is that I am a little reluctant to tell about it. When I am through, you will perhaps understand better why.

If I could illustrate this I would put in a photograph of the Girl, so that you could get some sort of a notion as to how she looks. You might not call her pretty, but you would have to call her good-looking—and wide-awake, and healthy, and happy. I think I never knew a happier person. And the more I think of it, the more I am com-

pelled to believe that real happiness does not depend on amusements. Because, the Girl is not dependent on—well, let the following incident, which occurred the other morning at the breakfast table, give you some idea of the Girl Problem in our home.

It was nearing the close of the High School term and the Younger Boy was hinting at some extra expenses in connection with a function known as the Hyperion Prom. The Hyperion Prom. is an annual affair, and means flowers and dances and refreshments for the High School literary and scientific societies.

I handed over the money the Boy suggested he needed, and then looked at the Girl.

She laughed. "I have paid for my share of the refreshments, Father," she said, and she looked so provokingly happy over it that I said, "Mary, I wish you would lend me some money. You always seem to have some."

"She helps Miss Thompson in the caf  teria," said the Younger Boy. It was the first I had known of it, and at first I felt a little annoyed. Because although I often orated before the assembled family on the nobility of physical labour, somehow it didn't seem just the thing to have one of my own children doing hard, dirty, hot work in a kitchen to earn spending-money.

But the Girl looked so happy and contented that all I had the heart to say was, "How much have you earned that way?"

"Thirty-five dollars this term," she said. "And let me tell you, Father, I am learning to make the

best pie. Why don't you come in to the caf  teria some day, and try our menu? You know the general public can come in after twelve-thirty, after the students are served."

"Well, I will. I generally go to the Chamber of Commerce and have to get there at noon in order to get a seat. But save me a slice of your best pie and I'll come over some day. I don't like the idea of your working in that hot kitchen this weather. You know you don't need to."

"But I like it. And I like to wait on the tables. It's fun. And if you want to borrow some money, Father, I can lend you ten, or even twenty dollars, if that will help you out."

"Thank you," I said. "Put it into a new dress to wear at the Prom."

"Much obliged," she said. "But I have other plans for the money if you don't want it."

She came around to my chair and, with a laugh, rumbled up my hair—what I have left—and kissed me good-bye as she and her brother started off to school. And then she ran around to her mother and kissed her, and hugged the Older Boy and ran out.

As the door closed, the College Boy said, "Father, did you know that Mary is going to spend that money she has earned working in that hot caf  teria to help provide a rest-room for the coloured girls in the High School?"

"No!" I exclaimed. "Who put that into her head?"

"She put it there herself. She says that these

girls are neglected by all the other girls, and that they have no place where they feel welcome at the recess periods. Mary is starting a lot of trouble."

"But," said my wife, "her motive is simply a real honest desire to help those girls. We can't discourage that sort of thing. There is too much of the other sort of action going on already."

"She is a queer girl," I commented, scratching my head, that part of it where the hair is not in the way. "She does not care for dances or movies or expensive dresses or anything else that most girls are crazy for nowadays."

"But it's awful funny, Dad," said the Boy. "She goes to the dances and never dances herself and she is the most popular girl in the room. And when it comes to scholarship, she has them all going. Did you see Mary's last report, Mother?"

Mother nodded, with something very much like a smile smothered in tears, proud and at the same time puzzled, as, I am frank to say, I was.

"Well, I don't see how she does it. Do you?" I said to my wife. "How can a girl nowadays keep so happy and contented and overflowing with spirits as our Mary, when she does not do what most girls do? It looks kind of spooky to me."

"But she told me the other day that she is not the only girl who does not care to dance or spend her money foolishly. She said that there were more than fifty girls in our High School who do not dance. So she is not so peculiar, after all. She has plenty of good company."

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, astounded, "that there are fifty girls in this town who do not care for dancing!"

"That is what Mary says. But she wouldn't care for it even if she was entirely alone. And she would be just as popular. But I know that her example has had a wonderful influence over very many girls in the school. She belongs to the class of girls that make women like Jane Addams and Mary Antin."

"Or Joan of Arc," I whispered. "Just think of having a girl like Joan in this family! If she is going to fight the battles of the world for the oppressed as she is doing for these High School girls——"

I didn't finish the sentence, for I did not know how. My wife's eyes were shining. "Mary is very human. She is not a Joan of Arc. She is an American girl, blessed with great good health, common sense, love of hard work, joy in doing for others and so much vitality that she does not miss the ordinary forms of common amusement current among most young people. And the fact that she retains the respect and goodwill of all her school-mates is due to the fact that they recognise honest convictions when they are free from hypocrisy. We ought to be proud of our Mary."

After the College Boy had gone out I said to my wife: "Do you know, I wonder sometimes what will happen when Mary falls in love with someone. I can't think of a single young man in this town who is good enough for her. Where do you think

we can find such a man? What will she do? There isn't a young fellow out at the college who can compare with her. It seems too bad to think she will probably have to grow up an old maid."

My wife laughed. She often smiles, but her laugh is comparatively rare. Mary has the same, rollicking, infectious, lilting rhythm.

"Do you know," she said, "that is one of the things that never worries me. I have the most perfect faith that some time Mary will have a happy home of her own. I am absolutely without any anxiety about it. And as for no young men being good enough for the Girl, I wonder how all the good girls like ours *do* manage somehow to get such good young men for husbands? The world does contain some fine young men, even fit for such fine young women as ours."

I looked across the table at my wife, and something in her eyes made me wonder if possibly she was suggesting that even a Mere Man like the one across the table from her, with all his faults, did have some real values. I wafted her a kiss, and when I had gone on down to my store I couldn't get rid of the thought that the different problems of my home at different times have given me. And as I went over the fact of the Girl in her happy, healthy, and normal development, and of the great prospect she has of a wonderful and useful life which did not depend for its power on the superficial things, I came more and more to the conclusion that all along the one greatest influence in the Girl's life, and in the lives of all our children,

could be traced to the wonderful example of their mother.

For that very night as I came quietly down out of my den in the upper story of the house, I saw my wife, as I looked through the half-open door of our room, kneeling at her accustomed favourite place by her writing-table, and I knew that as her custom was, she was praying for her children and the blessing of the Master on our home. And in all humility, I trust, I joined my prayers with hers, in thanksgiving for our home, and in an earnest petition that I might be a worthier father and husband, in solving all family problems, which I began to understand in my slow man fashion were being already solved, by the prayers of a good mother, prayers said out of the heart long before the children were born.

X

“DAD” UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

I HOPE it is quite clear to those who are interested in the problems of an average home as stated by the Mere Man, that it has been impossible to name all of them or even to suggest some of the most important which are very evidently omitted in the brief outline given. But I am not stating the problems that face every family, only a few of those which have come into my own experience.

In speaking of the Husband Problem I do not pretend for one moment that I have named all the things which make a husband a problem in a home. But I am trying to name a few of the things that were most troublesome in my own experience, and it is probable that the same experiences occur in other husbands' lives.

In the first place I hope I have made it clear that I have a real love for my home, and believe in it as the greatest institution in this Republic. I don't believe a man lives who thinks more of his wife and children than I do, even if I am only a Mere Man. After saying that, I am ready to make a confession or two. That is what this Problem amounts to.

The first thing that occurs to me to mention in the nature of a problem so far as my wife is con-

cerned, centered around a little matter of my habits as an eater.

I am a very healthy animal and enjoy my meals. But, like a good many American men, I have come to look upon food as something to be put into the system very much as coal is put into a furnace. And a short time after my Older Boy had begun to observe the way his father did things, I overheard him say to the Girl, his sister, when he did not know I was in the next room: "I wish father wouldn't eat like that. It makes mother feel bad."

That morning, after the children had gone off to school, I sat where I had heard that remark, wondering just what the Boy meant, and just what it was that made his mother feel bad. I went over in my mind all the eating habits I had, and finally decided if I had any habits that made my wife feel ill at ease at the table I would try to correct them, for I am one of a few men who have a hearty contempt for any one who cannot change a bad habit as he gets older. I am fifty-five, but I believe any man ought to be able to change his habits up to one hundred. After that, it won't make much difference with the folks here.

The next time the family was at the table, I started in on a careful system of eating that would be free from criticism, knowing from the Boy's remark that I was being observed. The first thing I noticed about myself was a habit I had acquired of pushing my food with my knife in my right hand upon my fork which I held in my left, and

then inserting the food that stayed on the fork into my mouth. It was an English habit I had learned from an old English business friend with whom I had visited once when a business trip across the water took me to London.

But as I noticed how often I missed part of the food I pushed on the fork, and wondered, at the time, why forks were not made with six tines instead of four, I began to think perhaps the English habit could not be Americanised, or at least that I had failed to master it, the same as I never could master chopsticks when I went into a Chinese restaurant in New York.

So I switched over to the United States habit of cutting up my meat with my knife and then shifting the fork over to my right hand. The Boy looked rather queer as he watched me, but I never said anything.

Then it occurred to me that I had been getting through my meals ahead of the rest of the family, so I slowed up, and just for the sake of seeing what the result would be I lingered over the toast and sipped my coffee so leisurely that I actually was eating something when all the rest of the family were through.

"You do not seem to be in any hurry this morning," my wife said pleasantly. Then the Boy snickered. And the Girl smiled and I felt foolish, but there was a twinkle in my wife's eye that paid me for the effort it had cost me to slow up.

"No," I said; "business is not rushing particularly just now."

"First time I ever saw Father finish last," said the Boy.

My wife looked over across the table at me with a grave look, that, as I looked back, brightened into a smile and then into a laugh. It was the same kind of a laugh that she used to have when I was courting her.

"It is healthier to eat slowly," I said, speaking to the Boy, with dignity. "Whatever you do as you grow up, take plenty of time for your meals."

I cannot dwell on this item, but enough to say that as I went on, I soon found out what the things were that made my wife "feel bad" when I ate. And really when you stop to think that in most homes at least twice a day all the year around most husbands and wives sit opposite each other to eat food, it does make some difference how they eat it. And if a man can't change a bad habit of eating to please his wife, I am sorry for him, and even more sorry for her.

The next thing I remember that caused me to be a Problem centered around the item of finances. And this, I learned many times since, is the rock on which many a fair craft of matrimony splits.

I had, of course, from the very first of our married life, paid all the household bills, grocery, gas, telephone, water, clothing, furniture, repairs, insurance, taxes, and everything else that makes a home worth while, and some that don't.

I had also, at different times, given my wife sums of money with which to buy what I supposed she needed, and for personal expenses about which I

had a rather vague vision, calling it in my mind “pin money.”

But one day when I happened to be worried a little about my business, my wife timidly asked me for some money. It was an unusual request and I said without thinking of how it sounded to her, “What do you want money for?”

She did not answer me, only looked at me as I had never seen her look before. And I remember I went away to my business, and was unhappy and uneasy all day thinking over that look.

Business took a happy turn that afternoon, and I came home at night feeling better. But the first glance at my wife showed me she had been crying.

That took me up with a short turn and a square hitch. I remembered what I had said to her in the morning when I had ask her what she wanted money for.

And right then and there I called her the old foolish names of our courting days, and begged her pardon for my short word.

“You can have all the money you need,” I said. And I pulled out all I had in my pocket and handed it to her.

She smiled through her tears, and handed it back.

“I don’t want it that way,” she said.

“What way do you want it?” I said, somewhat bewildered.

“I wonder,” she replied timidly after her fashion, “why I should have to need to ask you for money. Isn’t there some way in which some kind of arrangement could be made——”

She paused, and I did not just know how to go on, but I said I would think the matter out.

And I did think it out, and we have a definite money plan in our home that we find works for mutual happiness. It may not work in your home, but it does in ours; and this is the story of our home, not someone else's.

I found out after we had had a very frank and loving conference over the entire money matter, that, for instance, why my wife wanted some money that particular morning was to meet certain obligations she had assumed for her share in the federated woman's club. The women were putting up a club-house, and my wife wanted to have a share in the building. There were also coming due certain amounts of money she had felt obliged to pledge on missionary and young woman's association work, and a number of other calls that were within our means, and that meant keeping up my wife's reputation as a social worker.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed to myself as all these things gradually came into my knowledge, "what a grouch and worse I have been all these years. Here is my wife, as much a breadwinner as I am, taking care of the house and the children while I am down-town, cooking the meals, mending the clothes, training the children, working fourteen hours to my ten, and earning money, for it would cost me at least half I earn in my business if I had to hire a housekeeper and a cook and a manager. And I dole out to her a few dollars now and then, and expect her to get along somehow and be hu-

miliated by asking me as a great favour to let her have a little money, as if she had not earned it, just as much as if she were an expert housekeeper and teacher as she really is.”

In brief this is the arrangement we made, with some modifications as experience made it necessary to change it.

I had a regular income of about thirty-five hundred dollars a year. Of this amount I turned over to my wife every month enough to meet all the household expenses of living, such as groceries, clothing, and all the items that centered about the keeping of the house as a home. And I want to say right here that she managed the buying and use of all things so well as to cut down considerably most of the items that make up the household expenses.

Over and above all these items I gave to my wife to bank in her own name enough money to provide for all other necessary expenses outside of the immediate carrying on of the family living, so that she would not have to come to me for special occasions, and would have as her own for charitable and church and social work a certain amount which would be within our income and which we found, as time went on, varied only a little from the limit we had set, each of us making the agreement that any unusual expenditure would be the subject of mutual conference.

I wish I had more time to go on with this item. I heard, the other day, of an old friend of mine who has gone shipwreck on this money question in

his home. I think I came pretty near the breakers, but clawed away from the shore just in time.

I find as I go on that I have been a problem in my home on account of the easy-going habits I have had in the training of my children. I find on going over all my many failings that I have neglected my children, and as they have grown up I have had little to do with their religious instruction. I have left that to my wife, and perhaps it is better so. But speaking of religion, there is another place where I am sure I have disappointed my family. I have already told you how I got back into the Sunday-school life. And nothing I ever did ever pleased my wife more or benefited me more.

But I am quite sure at times when I consider my shortcomings as a Mere Man and a father and a husband, that I am a good ways from the religious influence I ought to be. We dropped the Family Altar out of our home several years ago. I know that my wife tries to keep it up in her own way, and when the children were little I know she would always read the Bible to them and teach them their prayers when they were put to bed, while I sat down-stairs reading the evening paper.

I revolve these matters a good deal as the years pass. I know they make problems for the dearest woman in the world.

One thing I am certain about. The cause of many unhappy homes and broken families is absent from ours. We have never been untrue to each other. Whatever faults I may have, that tragedy

has never cast a cloud over us. I suppose I am as much of a Problem as most husbands, but not that kind of a problem, thank the good God.

And the more I ponder over the many things that may contribute to make a Home either heaven or hell on earth, the more I am inclined to think that most of the problems can be worked out, and happiness secured, if love is at the basis of the married life, and a mutual agreement to carry the load of responsibility and privilege together. And God must be there, and religion as the foundation. Of that I am profoundly convinced as the years go by, and my husband duties become clear.

Of another thing I have become sure as the years pass on. I must give more time to the life and plans of my children. I am appalled as I think of the neglect I have been guilty of in letting my children have the fag end of my time and thought. I have devoted to business and to golf and to Chambers of Commerce and to clubs of various kinds, and to banquets and to other doings at least ten times as much time and thought as to my wife and children. I am surprised to find, as time goes on, how easy it is for me to turn over all the part of the home that belongs to the children to my wife.

I have an obligation as a father that I must assume. My wife is the best person in the world that I know, and I do not know what would happen if she should be taken away from us. I want to take my place with her in the responsibility of making a Home.

The lack of that quality is, I understand, from

recent figures in the Juvenile Courts, the one lack that causes homes to break down. I want to create a home, as much as a business. And my daily prayer now is that so far as in me lies I may do that great thing.

There is an old Arab proverb that to be a full grown man one must do three things! Build a home, write a book, and rear a son. I can never write a book, but, by the grace of God, I want to do the other two, even if I am only a Mere Man.

XI

THE FAMILY ALTAR

IN this narrative I have once or twice, and perhaps oftener, referred to the fact that the Family Altar had been discontinued in the home, and the reason I can give for it is the change in the habits of the family, especially when the children began to go to school.

I do not recall now just when we began to leave off the custom or what excuses I made at the time. But I do remember very well how grieved my wife was, and we had several rather serious talks over the matter. One thing came along after another, and gradually it seemed easier to let the habit fall off, as it became harder for us, like so many other families, to get the entire home circle together at any one time.

My wife still continued to read the Bible with the two younger children, and they said their evening prayers with her before they went to bed, up-stairs, and I remember I felt uneasy more than once as I could hear their voices with childish earnestness asking God to remember father and keep him well. Inasmuch as "father" was in his den during those periods, smoking a pipe or an expensive cigar, and letting mother do all the religious training of the little children who really belonged to both of us,

he did not always feel as proud as he should, as the words of the little prayer floated down to him from the children's bedroom, where he could picture the wife kneeling by them, her own prayer rising out of her heart that her children might be spared to grow up into brave, strong, honest Christians.

As you may remember, I have since given up the tobacco habit for the sake of the example to the Older Boy, and I have taken up a Sunday-school class, and in some other ways I hope I have improved my behaviour; but the Family Altar had been discontinued for so many years that I was not anticipating taking it up again until just recently an incident that was connected with one of our neighbours set me to thinking and acting on a new course, and the results are so important in our home that I am going to relate what happened.

I like good company when I walk down-town to my business, as I very often do, and one of my business acquaintances who lives in the next block, near enough to be called a neighbour, often comes out of his home as I go by and we walk down together, talking politics and business and also, I am frank to say, sometimes indulging in what is called "gossip" of a good-natured sort. For I have always contended that men are greater gossipers than women. I think it is only fair to ourselves, however, to say that our gossiping was never tinged with malice or ill-will, only a real interest in the affairs of the neighbourhood. If that sort of gossip were the only sort indulged in by people generally, very little harm would come of

it. I call it sometimes by another name—"human interest."

But a few weeks ago as I went by this man's house and slowed up in my walk in anticipation of his coming out, he came to the door and beckoned to me to come up the steps of the porch. I went up, and he said pleasantly, "Wife and I wonder if you would be willing to come in and join us this morning in our family devotions. One of the children was sick last night and we were up with him, and our breakfast was later than usual and we have only just finished. I want to walk down with you this morning and talk over that proposed plan to work up the union services in this part of town this summer."

I don't know why I felt embarrassed, but I did, and as I hesitated he said pleasantly, "We don't often invite others in to our circle at the hour of family prayer; but you are not a stranger, and I am sure you would feel at home with us if you care to stay."

At that I went up the steps and into the house. The wife greeted me with a smile and I found the three children seated in the living-room, each with a Bible, and my friend gave me one and said they were reading the Gospel of Mark through, using a new translation, because it was in some ways, he said, more interesting to the children in the modern language.

The plan was a simple one. The father read two verses of the chapter for the day, then the mother followed, then the oldest child in the circle and in

that order around the circle. I found myself reading my two verses as my host nodded to me to join, and after the reading, the mother went to the piano and began a familiar hymn. It happened to be one that I knew and I joined in with the rest, as I pride myself on a pretty good bass voice, and one of the things we have kept up in our home has been the hymn-singing on Sunday nights when enough of us are together to have that. I have to confess that of late years it has not been very often, and some time I will tell you more about what kind of a Sunday we have had and how different it has been from the Sundays I used to know when I was a boy on the old homestead.

When the hymn had been sung—and there were no hymn-books, but the children seemed to have committed the verses to memory—the father read a short prayer out of a book called *The Temple*, by Dr. Orchard, I afterward learned. Some time after this morning I bought a copy of this book and gave it to my wife, and she was greatly taken with it on account of the phrasing. I don't have a very good memory, so I don't recall the exact prayer used the first time I heard the prayer from this book, but I do remember the short petition my neighbour used after he had read from the book:

“We want Thy companionship today, dear Master, in our work and play, in our studies and our temptations. If we know that Thou art near us as a Companion, we feel sure we shall not want to do anything wrong or make Thee sorry. Will You go with us all day long?”

There was a moment of silence then, and after that the youngest boy began the Lord's Prayer, in which we all joined, and after another silence the children went quietly up to their father and mother and kissed them. Then they nodded pleasantly to me and went out to get their things for school.

As I went down the street that morning with my neighbour, I could not help thinking that what he called Family Prayers was exceedingly simple and easy, and I could not help going back in memory to my own boyhood when my own father, who had been a rather stern man, always maintained the Family Altar in something the same fashion. Only we read the entire Bible clear through by course, never skipping a single verse of any part of the book from beginning to end. And when we had finished we turned back to the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis and went at it again. I remembered that in that fashion I had read the whole Bible clear through five times before I went away and made a home of my own.

But as he walked along I found that the matter of business my neighbour had mentioned did not interest me, and I wanted to ask him about the practise of the Family Altar more in detail.

"I don't see," I said, "how you manage to get your family together in the morning for such a service. It's a scramble at our house in the morning. And the children seem to have all they can do to get up in time for breakfast and school, without anything more. How do you do it?"

"It's very simple. We get up a little earlier than you do."

I looked at my watch and for the first time realised that I was going down-town almost half an hour ahead of my usual time, on account of some unusual invoicing at the store.

"Do you mean that you get your family circle together every morning on purpose to have time for family devotions before the children start for school, so they won't have to hurry?"

"Exactly. And in order to do it we go to bed earlier than some people we know."

"You don't mean to say you go to all that trouble just to have——"

"Family worship?" he said, looking at me as we walked along, with a look that shamed me for the question I had put. "We think, my wife and I, that the trouble pays."

I did not say anything for a while, my mind flitting back to the old homestead, and the sight of my stern-faced, but thoroughly upright, father and my sweet-faced mother as they sat always in the same places after breakfast in the sitting-room, surrounded by the family (for ours was a large flock), observing, summer and winter, under all sorts of circumstances, and without a single omission, the custom of family prayers. And I knew that with all my criticism afterwards of that custom, I owed to it far more than I could ever measure for Bible knowledge and a grounding in the righteousness of its teaching.

"Do your children object to the early rising?" I asked after a while.

"Well, they have never known any other habit. When children have been started on a habit they have no other to compare it with."

"I think I would have trouble to start my children with such a practise," I could not help saying. "They are older, and I don't believe they would like it."

"We have somehow, my wife and I, had an old-fashioned notion that fathers and mothers were the ones to teach their children what they ought to like," my neighbour said, and he said it in such a simple fashion that I knew he was not reflecting in the least on anyone else's style of bringing up children.

"Your service is not very long," I said after another pause.

"Did you time it?"

"No, but I find it is only half-past eight now. The whole time could not have been over ten or twelve minutes."

"We reckon on about fifteen, and sometimes more, if the children want to read on into another chapter."

"And do they?"

"Yes, quite often. They get very much interested in the story of Christ. And why shouldn't they? It is the most fascinating story ever told."

"Do any other of your neighbours have family worship?" I asked.

"Not many. But some do." And he mentioned

three or four men in our block. "The number that I know is very small. I am afraid the custom has almost disappeared from our church people. But my wife and I would not give it up for any other. We count it the most necessary and beautiful way to begin the day's life."

I kept up a good hard thinking all day while at work on the invoicing in the store, and I astonished my wife when I came home that night by saying to her, "Mary, what do you say to beginning the custom of family worship if we are not too far along in years?"

I shall never forget the look on my wife's face. Every once in a while my wife looks just as handsome as she ever did when I was courting her, and that is saying a good deal. But with her look there came a tear into her eye even more beautiful than her smile.

I am a man, even if a Mere one, who prides himself on doing anything promptly when once I am convinced that it is all right to do. And so—I am making a good many short-cuts telling this event—I told the children that night that we would all try to get up a little earlier next morning so as to make a start at the Family Altar.

I think they were a good deal surprised. The Girl put her arms about her Daddy's neck and gave him an extra hug before she went up-stairs, and after the family had all retired, the Mere Man sat in his room to go over the entire matter and plan the course of reading and all.

And as time goes on—that was only a few weeks

ago—we find that the morning devotions have put a new and exceedingly interesting factor into the day's beginning, and given colour to its program in ways that we did not dream. The bugbear of not being able to get the family together has proved to be like most bugbears—it disappeared when once we walked up to it. I don't deny that at first it was not easy to change the old habits of morning rising and all that. And I was not used to offering prayers of my own.

But gradually I find it is true that there are no obstacles that can not be overcome in the way of adopting new habits if you really are interested and want to do a thing. And I go down to my store feeling as if somehow the day was begun right. It has started with God, where it should. And I wonder, as the days go by, how we ever dared to start it in any other way?

XII

LAPSES ON THE LINKS

OF course anyone knows that a man's home problems are those that come closer to him than any others, but woven into them are the problems of his business and social life. With a good many men—and I am one of them, I confess—the business troubles sometimes seem to get the uppermost and receive more attention than the home. But I have lately had a new experience which somehow makes me feel as if a man's home and his outside life are all linked up together. The events may have occurred outside, but as I look back on them now I am confident that they will have a very important influence on the home lives of more families than our own.

The first problem that hit me like a blow between the eyes was bound up with a football game in the Older Boy's college. It was played on a Saturday afternoon, and I missed it because I had an important game of golf to play off in a friendly match. I usually go with the Boy to football games and "root" for his college.

Now it happens in our home, as in a good many others, that the Sunday morning after a college football game, the conversation at the breakfast table centers around the game of the day before. I

know that my wife does not like this habit. She says, and I think with considerable force, that we do not give the minister a fair chance when we go to church with our minds filled up with football. His sermon can't make a touchdown on such minds, and the nearest he can come to it is to kick a field goal or make a gain on a forward pass. Of course my wife does not use this particular language, but that is what she means, and I am inclined to think she is about right.

But on this particular morning she certainly could not complain about the Boy's conversation, for he was unusually silent, and when I ventured to ask him about the game he answered me so short that I was surprised, for it was not his customary manner. But I dismissed the impression because my own mind was rather taken up with the golf game I had played that Saturday afternoon, when I had beat my own best score and made forty on a difficult nine-hole course, and had made a three on a five hundred and sixty-eight-yard hole, a thing which had been done only a few times by the men I was in the habit of playing with. I couldn't help making a self-complimentary remark about my feat at the table, but my wife did not encourage my going on, so I did not repeat my congratulations, and went down to Sunday-school and church, forgetting about the Boy's strange behaviour until he came into my den after church in the evening. He had not gone to church, but, as I afterwards learned, had been brooding over his trouble in his own room all the afternoon.

I think I have said several times that it is a habit in our family to come at once to the point about any matter under discussion, and the children have been encouraged in this habit, because if there is anything I detest it is diplomacy and sparring for an opening or an advantage. So the Boy plunged right in as if he were "bucking the line." I use the college language because the topic was on what occurred around a football game.

"Father," he said (and I apprehended at once because he did not say "Dad," he was fearful of my attitude), "what would you say if I were to confess that I was in a tight place and needed some money before morning,—worse than I ever needed it?"

I did not answer at once, as I had been giving the Boy a liberal allowance, in fact had made him, the week before, an additional present of twenty-five dollars because he had a birthday. So I was a little taken back by his question.

"You see," he went on rather desperately as I kept silent, "I put up that twenty-five dollars you gave me last week on the game, and we lost, and I have to pay it tomorrow. If a fellow doesn't pay his bets he loses standing. I've got to pay or leave school."

The Boy was pretty well wrought up by this time, and so was I.

"Do you mean to say you bet that birthday money I gave you on a football game!"

"Yes. You see I thought, and so did all the fellows, that the Seneca team hadn't the ghost of a

show. And then in the last six minutes of the last quarter, Burns fumbled, a thing he never did before, and they made a touchdown and goal, and beat us one point. Just think of it! One point, Dad! But it might just as well be one hundred points as far as the bet goes. I lost and I've got to pay. And I'm not the only one."

"Do you mean to say that the boys generally bet on the games?"

He looked at me in surprise.

"Most of them do. And twenty-five dollars is nothing to what some of them put up."

"It's outrageous!" I said. "It's gambling pure and simple. Or rather 'impure' and complex. Well" (and I think I must have glared rather fiercely at him), "of course I'll lend you the money, but with the understanding that it comes out of your next month's allowance."

He looked a little disturbed at that, but on the whole he was wonderfully relieved, and thanked me handsomely as he went out, after I had made him out a check.

But when he was gone I sat there in the den thinking.

I don't mind saying I was very much bowled over by the Boy's confession. I had known, of course, that college boys bet on the football games, but I did not know my boy ever did, and I had no knowledge of the amounts that were put up. The whole thing was deeply upsetting. I was the more disturbed because I saw that it was the fact that he had lost that was troubling him, not the betting

itself. In other words, I said to myself that there was evidently no standard in the college condemning betting. Nearly all the students bet, and as I afterwards learned, some of the teachers as well.

I was still going over the incident and getting no mental relief from the process when the bell rang and soon after one of my old friends came up-stairs and walked into the den with a familiar greeting. He was a frequent companion with me on the golf links, and in fact he had been my competitor in the Saturday game. And it was not unusual for him to drop in Sunday nights for a little friendly visit. My wife was up-stairs writing to the Girl, who at this particular time had gone off to a college down East, and my friend and I were all alone. I had motioned him to a comfortable seat in one of the deep chairs, but before sitting down he pulled out his pocket-book and laughed as he handed over a five-dollar bill.

"Here you are, old man. I didn't have it with me, you know, and you said you would trust me. I'll pay the interest, too, if you insist."

For a second I was puzzled, for the incident with the Boy had been occupying my mind. Then in a flash I remembered that the money was a bet we had had on the golf game when we started out. My friend was a better player than I was, and I had never beaten him before, but the wind had helped me out on the sixth hole where I made my three, and I had made unusually long puts and won out with four points.

I took the money, and something in my look

must have arrested his attention, for he paused as he was about to sit down, and said as he laughed again: "You don't mean to say you have forgotten yesterday? No man ever forgets when he makes a three on six. But the wind helped you. It actually seemed to fall flat when I drove off."

I was still thinking of something else rather startling, but he sat down and, seeing something strange in my look, he said: "You don't need to feel uneasy to take the money, old man. In fact, it's a little I made on the side from the bet my boy made at the football game yesterday. He put up five for me on the Seneca team. I hadn't the least idea they would win, but it's my old school, and I felt rather ashamed not to be there. But when it comes to golf, nowadays, it has football distanced with us old chaps, eh?"

Still I did not reply, and my friend seemed annoyed.

"You don't object to my paying a bet on Sunday, do you? If so, hand it back and I'll come in tomorrow."

Then I found my voice and managed to say, "I have been going over a little matter that I want to talk over with you seriously."

"Well," he said, "seeing it is still Sunday, go ahead."

Then, moved by an impulse that pushed me along with a power that I could not resist, I frankly gave him the story of the Boy's bet over the game and his coming to me for help. I knew I was not betraying any confidence, because this friend was an

intimate of our family and had more than once shown his friendship in practical ways.

When I was through, he leaned forward where he sat and said lightly, "Well, old man, what of it?"

His question irritated me.

"See here! What kind of an example do we older people set the younger generation when we bet ourselves over a game and then feel disturbed over the same thing when they do it! I confess I never gave it real thought until your payment of our betting followed so close on the Boy's action."

"Oh, pooh!" he said. "Why make such a fuss over a little thing. You wouldn't have felt so bad if the Boy had won. Confess, old man, you feel bad because you had to come down with the twenty-five."

And at that point, do you know, I realised that this old business friend of mine *had no standard on betting* any more than the college boys. He did not see anything wrong in it. And, as he said afterwards as we sat there discussing the matter, the golf players generally did not consider it as anything more than a friendly little custom to add a little more zest to the play.

"Why, look here," he said. "I'll admit that five dollars is too much, especially when you lose, as I did yesterday. You know it's generally not much over a dollar for the game, or twenty-five cents on a hole. What's a little thing like that between friends? You are making too serious a matter of

our practice and the Boy's habit. It really is not betting in any professional way."

"It's getting something for nothing. It's vicious in principle and wrong in practice. It is turning the game of golf all over the country into a professional sport, and if it keeps on it will discredit it just as baseball was discredited by the betting on it in professional circles."

I spoke with some heat, for I was fast beginning to feel internally what I had started out to condemn on technical grounds.

My friend looked surprised and somewhat embarrassed. "If you feel like that, why don't you speak to the House Committee about it? Practically every member of our Club puts up something on every game."

The remark startled me. If I had scruples just roused as to the viciousness of the growing betting on the grounds of nearly every golf course in the country, what ought I to do as a member to express my protest? It raised a question that I pondered over after my friend had gone away, leaving me with the impression that his attitude of dismissing the matter as of trivial importance would be the attitude of nearly every member of the golf club to which I belonged, and for that matter of every club in America.

I had rather an unsatisfactory night's rest, and the next day I had reached no satisfactory conclusion, so far as my own course was concerned. And it was not until the middle of the week that I decided on a positive course, the results of which I

do not claim to measure yet, but I give the story of my own experience with the warning to the reader of this confession that I am relating what happened in my own golf club, not in yours or someone else's.

My friend of the game on that memorable Saturday called me up from his office Wednesday and challenged me to a game to wipe out, he said, the stain of his defeat, and we went out in the afternoon. We agreed not to put up anything on the game, and my friend dismissed the whole matter by saying before he drove off at the first tee, "I can stand a better show if I don't risk another five with you."

We came to the end of the course with a reversal of the Saturday game. Indeed, I am ashamed to tell what my score was. I think I never played a series of poorer shots or sent more balls into the rough or lost more balls in the water hazards. As we were walking to the club-house my friend rallied me on my brilliant shots. "It must have been because we failed to put something up on the game," he said, as we went to our lockers to change our clothing.

I was not feeling in the mood for any pleasantries and was silent. But as I sat down on the bench in front of my locker and started to take off my golf shoes, I saw one of the members in the alley next to ours bring out of his locker a bottle of whisky and some glasses.

The sight was so familiar that at first I did not give it any particular thought. Then it seemed to flash on me like a sudden bolt that I was a member

of an institution that was throwing contempt on the Constitution of the United States, and breaking a law because we shielded ourselves behind our respectability and wealth and social standing. There was no concealment on the part of the man as he beckoned to two other men who had just come in from the grounds.

"Plenty more, fellows, where this came from. Easy to get." And he frankly told where he had bought it and laughed as he poured out three glasses.

As he turned to offer one of the newcomers a glass his eyes encountered mine, and he called out across the alley, "Have one?"

I shook my head, but my friend, who was dressing near by, nodded and accepted a glass. As we finished dressing and closed our lockers and started down the corridor we could see several groups seated on their benches drinking out of similar bottles. It was a common everyday sight, and I had passed it by for months as too common to give it any particular attention.

But somehow today I seemed to feel a disgust about the whole thing—the betting and the drinking and all. And I went home more disturbed over the sight than I was over my poor playing, which is saying a good deal for a golf player.

For what were we doing in our golf club, and hundreds of others all over the land, but spitting on the Constitution and the Flag when we bought liquor made in defiance of the law and drank it in the name of good fellows? What excuse did we

have because we belonged to an exclusive club, the members of which were socially far up in the circles of the city's business and financial life? Why were we any better than the man who was a bootlegger or the man who made the stuff we bought?

I have not time to tell all the argument that went through my heart and mind, nor the torment I felt before I gathered the courage to do what I finally did the next time I went out to the golf grounds. But it is the result you want to know, not my mental and moral gymnastics.

In brief I went to the Chairman of the House Committee and voiced my convictions on the two matters of the betting on the games and the drinking of the members in the club-house, and asked him to call a group of the members together to discuss the whole matter.

He was tremendously upset by my coming to him. But he made out a careful list of men, even including the very man who had offered me the drink, and we spent the better part of a whole night talking the matter over. And before we separated I want to say we reached a unanimous conclusion that the betting and the drinking were not removed from our club, the game of golf would degenerate into a professional disgrace.

As one of the members said: "Fellows, I have been ashamed of this whole business for a long time, but I was too much of a coward to do anything. About the only athletic game left in the world that is not spoiled by betting is the Scotch game of curling, and that can't be played very well

in the summer. And when it comes to this booze business it discredits us as good citizens, and there is no excuse for it. Let's cut it out before it cuts us out."

If I remember rightly it was the man who offered me a drink who seconded a motion to instruct the House Committee to post notices forbidding, under pain of expulsion from membership, both the betting and the bringing of liquor into the club-house.

I slept pretty well the next night. And let me tell you that the next good chance I had to talk with the Boy about college betting I did so without having to apologise that I was doing the same thing. And if I have overstated the conditions that exist in the golf clubs generally over the country, I shall be glad to know it. But, as I was saying, I have described my golf club, not yours. Still I cannot help wondering how long it will take to enforce the prohibitory law of this country as long as men who call themselves respectable citizens salute the Flag as it waves over the State House and step on it every time it is hauled down from the golf-house.

XIII

'TROUBLE NEXT DOOR

'UP to this point those who have been reading these plain confessions by the Mere Man must have noticed that he has talked a good deal about himself and his family and not much about anything else, as if the main thing were the Mere Man's own personal problems and experiences.

Well, I am frank to say that is so, and I also think the same thing could be said of most men and women—that they are absorbed in their own affairs, and unless something special or unusual comes along they don't go very far outside the little circle in which they live.

Such an event came along and collided with me a few days ago, and jolted me out of my narrow habits of thought; in fact, the collision was so severe that I have hardly cleared away the wreck and got back on my own home track yet.

It started one evening when, just as I had settled down to read the paper, my wife came in from our neighbours' where she had been summoned by a telephone call just as we were finishing supper.

She looked very much distressed as she came into the "den," and I was afraid at first that some accident had happened to one of our own flock.

"Oh, John! How dreadful! Just think! Their boy has been arrested for speeding; and more awful yet! When the car overturned one of the boys was killed and two of the girls were terribly hurt, one of whom will be disfigured for life!"

She stopped there, all unstrung with the excitement, and I was so shocked that I couldn't say a word. I did not know my neighbour's boys very well, but the older one was in High School with our Younger Boy, and they were companions and playmates together.

"Won't you go over and say a word to our neighbour? He and his wife are in real trouble. And, oh, John! It may be even worse. I think some of the boys had been drinking. The boy, according to witnesses, tried to make the corner down on the avenue at a speed of forty miles. Oh, how dreadful the whole thing is!"

I don't know anything I dread more than meeting folks who are in real trouble. I don't know what to say to them, and I feel mentally awkward. But I couldn't avoid this painful neighbourly duty, and I went right over.

I found the man alone, and at a glance I saw that the terrible event had put a heavy hand on his heart and mind. The boy himself was in his room, upstairs. And his mother was with him. He had been released on bond after his arrest, and I could not see him, but the father said he was suffering from severe bruises and mental shock.

I did my best to say a word of comfort, but dreaded to ask the real cause of the accident. The

man himself, however, dry-eyed and with marks of the tragedy plain on his face and in his manner, said, because he was sure the report would be in the morning paper: "There is no doubt some of the boys had been drinking. I don't know whether George was or not. Only at the first, in the excitement, the officer who arrested him asked him if any of the boys had been drinking, and he said they had. They had all been to a dance and the liquor had been bought and smuggled in late in the evening."

The whole thing, as the neighbour talked, smote me as one of the most horrible things I had ever heard of in our town. I could hardly believe it could be possible. And I am sure my words of attempted consolation were very imperfect and feeble. And I left my neighbour's house burdened with his heart-breaking trouble, a trouble that had never yet come to our home, as I devoutly told my wife when I got back to the house.

The morning paper had a long account of the accident, on the front page, and directly charged the boys with drinking, and the neighbour's boy was named as the most responsible, as he was driving the car and was criminally careless.

My wife spent a part of the day over at the neighbour's with the mother. I saw the father start out of his home for his business down-town and he looked old and broken. My heart went out to him. My own home never seemed to me so great or so beautiful as in contrast with my neighbour's, and at the same time I trembled at the near-by tragedy! What if it had been my own

home! What fearful wrecks through drink and lawlessness are flung on the shore by young life's passion! What daily tragedies greet us on every daily paper's page! Only up to this time, none had ever grazed our home so near as our own neighbour.

I want to close this incident, which is not fiction, but a most real and terrible fact in my own home town, by saying that our neighbour's boy was finally tried and released on some technicality. It was proved, however, that he had been drinking, but one of the other boys had bought the liquor in a neighbouring town. We hope our own town authorities will be shocked by this event into something more than a spasm of law enforcement. But all that will not bring to life the young life that was rubbed out, it will not restore the beauty of the girls who were mangled, and it will not lift the cloud of shame and grief which has settled over our neighbour's house.

At our morning prayer circle, the Girl, her voice breaking as she offered the prayer for the day, said: "Oh, Father, bless and comfort our neighbours, for we do not know how to do it."

And all through that day I could not help feeling how close indeed are our neighbour's tragedies to our own circle. And the Girl's prayer lingered in my heart, for the Divine alone seemed to be great enough to help our neighbours to bear this heavy cross.

Every one in our town, of course, had read the account of this tragedy as given by the daily paper,

and an editorial followed up the account with a solemn warning against the automobile speeders and a "clarion call" to the lax police department to get busy and enforce the ordinance which made ten miles an hour the maximum on the avenue.

I ought to have known better, but after reading the full story of the tragedy and the editorial comment, I walked down-town to the store thinking that the automobiles might be crawling along so as to make it a little less risky for me to cross over the Avenue to the store, which is on the opposite side from my home street.

But I think I never "missed more narrow escapes" in my life than I did that day, to quote one of my wife's hired girl's common expressions. I was very nearly hit at three different times on the very corner where the dreadful accident had occurred two nights before. And as I started for home late in the afternoon it seemed to me that the whole town had speed mania—no hands held out by the way of signal, no horns sounded, no stopping of the cars rushing down the avenue at twenty and more miles an hour.

So that when I reached home, after dodging a dozen reckless drivers on almost every corner, I was not in a very good humour with the police department, with the reckless youth that apparently no tragedy could bring to its senses, and with the whole rushing, speeding world in general.

I gave expression to my feelings at the table.

"If I were Chief of Police in this town, do you know what I would do with these speed maniacs?"

I said, looking at my wife, to whom I generally addressed remarks of this sort at the meal time. Usually my wife smiled in anticipation of my outbursts, but the cloud of the recent tragedy was still over her and she was very serious.

"Father would look fine in a uniform," said the Girl.

"And with a big tin star on it," added the Older Boy.

I ignored all this and went on. "Well, I would stop every one of these speeders, make them drive their cars up to the curb, lock the wheels, and put a big tag on the side of each car where all the foot passengers could read: 'Mr. — (giving his name) has been arrested for exceeding the limit for driving, and will be held here half an hour!' That would teach them a lesson. It has come to the pass in this town that the boys and girls, and every one old and young, pay no regard to life. And they don't mind a little fine. Only, the police arrest no one unless there is a murder like the one day before yesterday."

"You don't mean that, John!" my wife said. "Remember what a dreadful thing for our neighbour to think of their boy as a murderer!"

"But what did he actually do? He drank, he lost control of his nerves, he recklessly drove his father's car at forty miles around a crowded corner, an accident occurred, one boy was killed, two girls seriously disfigured, and several families thrown into agony. What other name can be given to such actions? And every day we read of similar ac-

counts in the papers, occurring in almost every state of this Union. And this very day in our own town, in spite of the awful example of these young folks, the automobile drivers old and young are charging over the crowded streets with no lesson learned and no ordinances enforced."

I spoke with considerable feeling, as I recalled the closeness of my own body to death itself that very day. I had not spoken of that, for I did not want to alarm my wife. But just as I spoke we could hear the roar of a heavy car coming down our street, the cut-off out, contrary to law.

I rose from the table and went over to the window in time to see a shining blur of goggle-lights, a rushing black form as it roared by our house, and it was gone pounding down the street more than thirty miles an hour, followed almost immediately by a motorcycle, cut-off out, making the night hideous as it also roared past at satanic speed.

"It's a mad world," was all I said, as I came back to the table.

My wife said hardly a word all during the rest of the meal. But when I went into the library to read the evening paper, she came in and put her hand on my shoulder.

"John," she said wistfully, "our neighbours are in very great trouble. Can't you go over again and see them? They need Christian comfort."

I recalled that our neighbours were not church members, and that in all the years we had lived so near I never had made any effort to help them into the church or to talk to them of Christianity. And

now they were in a situation where the ordinary everyday expressions of sympathy would not dispel the gloom that had settled over them. Truly they needed "Christian comfort."

I shall have to ask you to read in the next chapter what I said and the astonishing thing that happened afterwards. For, without knowing it at the time, I was very near one of the most remarkable events in my life. And all on account of the tragedy which had come into my neighbour's home.

XIV

BEING NEIGHBOURLY

NOW, I think I am as brave as most men, but there are certain things I have never wanted to face, and among them the task of approaching any of my acquaintances and talking on serious subjects, especially religion.

But my neighbour's trouble was so serious, involving, as it did, the disgrace brought home to him by his boy's misconduct, that I could not very well refuse to do something, even if it were only to offer the regulation commonplaces of sympathy.

As I started to go over there, my wife followed me out into the hall and said: "You won't forget, will you, John, that they are not church members. Don't you think, perhaps——" (and she hesitated timidly in a way she has when she is not certain of my attitude), "perhaps they need God more than anything right now? And could you—do you think—find an opportunity to say something to them about the need of God in their lives to give them real comfort?"

"I'm afraid I'm not good enough to——" I started to say something, and was really embarrassed by my wife's suggestion. But she put her hand on my shoulder and said, speaking in the earnest way I like:

“It isn’t necessary to be an angel before you can point them out to others. And I have been talking to the mother over there, and she is thinking seriously. You could help him.”

“Could I?” I said to myself as I went out and started to go up my neighbour’s steps.

The question was so insistent that instead of going up and ringing the bell, I walked around the block thinking over all the possible things I might say to my neighbour as he was having one of the most serious experiences of his life.

The usual round of conversation at such times would be something as follows: “Awful accident. Awfully sorry, old man. How is your wife standing it? Was your car a complete wreck? Any insurance? If there is anything we can do, let us know.” (And so forth.)

But how much “Christian comfort” was there in all that? It was the ordinary, stereotyped, everyday talk my neighbour expected and about all he received from his business friends. But how far would it go to satisfy his hunger for real comfort or dispel the gloom that had settled over his wife and himself?

I continued around the block twice before I finally went up my neighbour’s steps and rang the bell.

He came to the door and I was relieved to see from his look that he was very glad to see me. It made the resolve I had made during my walk around the block take form and removed some of the embarrassment under which I was still labouring.

My neighbour was reading the evening paper when I went in and he seemed genuinely glad to see me. His wife was at work in the kitchen and he said she would be in presently. So we sat and talked over the usual and regular topics of conversation. I have wondered secretly a good many times why intelligent human beings waste so much time talking over superficial and silly topics when the world is so full of wonderful things to discuss. But, like most men, I seldom get any further with my business friends than to exchange funny stories or thresh over the worn-out topics of local business, politics and the small change of talk common to our part of town.

Making this call this time with my wife's parting words sounding in my mind, and with my neighbour's trouble plainly visible even through his apparent attempt to cover it up, I was going over in my thought any possible opening for a change in our talk when his wife came in.

I had not expected to make any remarks to them both and I sat there at first awkward and dumb and getting a little more embarrassed every minute. But, to my relief, the neighbour's wife helped me out by saying: "I am so thankful to your wife for her help at this time. She has been such a comfort to me."

"Yes," I managed to say, "she seems to know how to say just the right thing. She's better at it than I am."

"Oh, I don't know about that!" the man said. "We need every bit of sympathy we can get during

these days. And we certainly appreciate your coming over tonight."

"Yes, indeed!" said his wife earnestly. And the next minute, to my embarrassment, and immediately afterwards, to my relief, she began to cry, saying in between her sobs:

"Your wife brought us the first real Christian word of comfort we have had. It is different from any other. And she talked to me about coming into the church and making friends with other people like you."

Almost before I knew what I was saying, I replied: "And why don't you both come in? It would be a great thing for you right now while you are having this trouble."

My neighbour sat there looking rather strangely at me, and I could note how his face reddened, but his lips quivered.

"We don't know a thing about the church, wife and I. But we have been talking it over since your wife mentioned it. Tell us something about it. What do we have to do? Or believe? Or subscribe to? Really, we confess to a pretty large ignorance. But we need comfort and help right now, and if the Church can give it——"

He paused as he looked wistfully over at me and his wife leaned forward eagerly; her interest joining that of her husband, and both of them groping out for human and divine consolation.

And I sat there almost dumb with the thought that all these years I, a church member and professing Christian, had lived side by side with these

next-door neighbours and had never in all that time made any effort to help them into the Church or talk to them of Christianity. I could recall how, for years, every Sunday morning, in the summer, I had gone by my neighbour's on my way to church and seen my neighbour out on his porch reading his Sunday morning paper, and I would exchange some jest with him, but never invited him to go with me. And I could not help wondering now, as the door of invitation had been thrown open by my neighbours themselves, whether I was in any way fit to serve as a messenger of my Master to these two who did not know Him or love Him, but who, driven by the storm of their own trouble to seek refuge somewhere, turned blindly to me because I was at least nominally a professing disciple of Jesus and a church communicant.

But I have since been devoutly thankful that I did not let the sense of my own unworthiness hinder me from giving these friends the answers to many questions they were soon eagerly asking. And before many minutes I found myself enthusiastically explaining the life of my church and telling them what a wonderful help it was in its wonderful friendships and its doors of world-wide service and its vision of Brotherhood.

They listened as they had never listened before at any evening social gathering where our two families had been together.

After a while, as question and answer paused for a quiet moment, the man said, turning to his wife: "Martha, why don't we join the Church and

know something of this Source of comfort, and taste of God's mercy?"

His wife's eyes softened with tears. And then she said, to my complete surprise and almost consternation, as she turned her look towards me:

"Would you pray for us that we might be led to take this step as we should?"

In all my life I had never, except for my own wife when she was dangerously ill, offered a prayer audibly in my family circle, for any one else. And at first I was beaten to the earth with the sense of my own utter weakness. But the evening's experience had been leading up to this, and after a silence, I found myself, with broken utterance and stumbling phrases, asking for God's blessing on my neighbours.

When I was through, the man and the woman were both sobbing. I think I have never had a more profound sense of Divine presence than at that moment, for it was a new and wonderful experience for me.

Before I went away, I asked if I might send my pastor to them to see them about church membership, and they eagerly welcomed the request.

And I called him up as soon as I went back into my own house. The hour was late, but I felt a glow at my heart that was new to me, and when my pastor answered my call and in a note of appreciation for my visit said he would call on my neighbours the next day, I hung up the receiver and went up-stairs to meet my wife and relate to her the glad news.

She listened to it with eyes that overflowed with thanksgiving. And I can truly say that the events of that night marked a new experience in my life, for never before had I tasted the peculiar joy of having a share in leading a soul to see God.

My wife and I will treasure, all our life, the scene in the church when our neighbour and his wife and the two girls joined our church. The boy who had caused them their trouble had gone away to a school in the east. The pastor in his prayer remembered all the household. And we can see every day, my wife and I, the wonderful change that the church is creating in our neighbours. There is a peace and joy in their lives they never had before.

And as for myself, I have been wondering why I don't see some of my other neighbours in the block and talk and pray with them about the Christian life. I wonder sometimes if they sometimes think I am a queer church member, to belong to the greatest institution on earth, and never mention it or try to get others to love it and come into it. I wonder why I can talk to my neighbours about everything else except the greatest thing—Religion.

XV

HOW THE MERE MAN AND HIS FAMILY SPEND SUNDAY

I HAVE delayed setting down in these pages how we spend Sunday at our house, not so much because I am ashamed of how we do, but because I felt, somehow, we ought to be able to make a better showing. But in telling how we spend the day I have tried to be honest and truthful and give the facts just as they have been. And here they are:

I do not mean to say we spend every Sunday in the year like this, but it is a fair average. In the first place we have always had a habit, as a family, of getting to bed earlier on Saturday night than on any other night of the week. This habit was established by my wife because her folks in western New York began Sunday at sundown on Saturday and ended the day of rest and worship at sundown on Sunday. It is not a bad way to begin Sunday and for many reasons we have often wished that the old New York custom were a national one. It gives people a good night's rest, and they can get up a little earlier Sunday morning than on any other day, so as to enjoy to the full the worship and rest and service that go to make up what we have found is the three-fold way to use the day. And it also is

the fairest way to treat the minister. It has never seemed to me to be fair to the minister when his members all come to hear him preach after they have spent Saturday night clear up into Sunday at the dance or the theater or the social gathering, and face him too tired of mind and body to let his message find a way into heart and life. And yet that is what most ministers face Sunday morning—a crowd of folks who have been up very late Saturday night, have overslept Sunday morning and have gone to church in no mental condition to receive a spiritual repast. The minister has just one chance at us with preaching once a week and we make it as hard as we can for him and for ourselves.

So our family has found from practice that the best way to begin keeping Sunday is to begin Saturday night. I know that most people, even church members, will smile at this, because most of them do just the opposite. But you have not asked me how my neighbours spend Sunday, and I will not try to go into particulars about them, beyond saying that from all I know of their habits most of them go out to something in the way of amusement or social gatherings or lodges or clubs on Saturday nights and stay out late.

As I said, we get up earlier Sunday morning than usual after a good night's rest. The first thing I do is to go out and get the Sunday morning paper and lay it on the library table and let it stay there until afternoon.

This will sound like a fairy-story to every one who reads it. But the Girl, before she left us,

started this habit by saying: "It isn't fair to go to church with our minds and hearts and memories filled with the stories of the crimes and politics and scandals and sport and society gossip of the world so that the minister has to crowd his spiritual message as best he can into brains that are already crowded with the affairs of the world. We can live until the last of the day if we don't know who has applied for divorce or who has gone wrong among the movie people."

And I cannot help believing the Girl was entirely right. And another thing she persuaded me to do was to take the so-called coloured supplement comic when I went down cellar to fix the furnace, and to lay it at rest in the crematory of the furnace fire. Which I did on Sunday, and still do.

We must seem to you like a very peculiar family so far in our Sunday observance. And I suppose there is not another family in our town that waits until afternoon before reading the Sunday paper. But one thing I have always stood out for was the privilege of an American citizen to be independent, as long as it does not interfere with the liberty and welfare of other citizens in their homes. We may be very peculiar, but I reckon also that our habits don't hurt any one and we don't miss the comics in our intellectual and spiritual development.

While I am putting the furnace into shape and doing other things to help get the breakfast, every other member of the family is doing his bit to help where it is needed. My wife does her part in getting breakfast, as most of the time, like nearly all

the families in our town, we have no servant. The Girl, when she was with us, always set the table or put things in order wherever they needed it, and each of the boys did something, carrying ashes, sweeping off the walks or steps in winter, and doing anything Mother needed.

We had our family altar at the table before we ate. It consisted in the reading of a few verses from one of the Gospels, the singing of a hymn, my wife going over to the piano, the offering of a short prayer sometimes by the Girl or her Mother, and later on in my Christian life, by myself. Then we had grace or thanks said, sometimes by the whole family joining in with:

*“For these and all Thy gifts of love
We give Thee thanks and praise;
Look down, our Father, from above,
And bless us all our days.”*

Or one of the children, when they were little, was encouraged to offer his own prayer of thanks.

We enjoy our meals, and take plenty of time for them. After breakfast each member of the family helps in the necessary kitchen work. The Girl used to do the bed-making and the boys would help with the dishwashing, and many hands made light of the work. There were the usual duties of dress and preparation for Sunday-school and church. And we all go down to Sunday-school, which is before church time, together. For of late years, since I took a class of boys, we have all belonged to that

part of the church and have got a good deal of help from it.

We all stay to the morning preaching service, and find it refreshing and helpful. Our minister does not always hit off with all of us, and he himself says he wonders that so many people come to hear him, but generally he gives us something worth while, and my wife and I generally go up after the sermon and tell him so. It helps him to do better next time.

Then we get home about one o'clock and have a simple dinner, most of which has been prepared Saturday afternoon, and everyone helps, as we do for breakfast.

After dinner we spend the afternoon in different ways. I often take a nap. The Girl used to go down to the Young Women's Association where she had a class of shop girls who were very much in love with her. The Older Boy quite often went up to the college to visit with some of the "Y" boys there and talk over the "Y" program. The Younger Boy was, and is, the restless one. His mother used to read to him when he was little. Of late years I have taken to going out with him for a long walk into some very interesting woods near our place. We take a camera along and sometimes we get some very interesting pictures of birds and wild animals. This may seem to some people like a very bad way to spend Sunday afternoon with a boy. But perhaps some of you who spend part of Sunday poring over the Sunday comics and reading the crime stories before church will trade even

with my habit in going out with the boy and the camera.

A part of the afternoon is spent by my wife and all the family in writing letters. My old mother is living with a brother down east, and I have written her a letter every Sunday for many years. My wife quite often goes over to the hospital and quietly visits with some one over there, especially if some members of the church is there. And the others of the family generally write a letter or two on Sunday afternoon.

Sunday evening the boys go down to the young people's society, which is a live one, and where the Older Boy is learning how to talk on his feet and even the Younger has tried out some of his ambition to say things. They are enthusiastic over their society. My wife and I don't always go to the evening preaching service, but we generally do, and we are all, as a family group, oftener at that service than absent.

When we get home after church service, we have one custom that we have seldom omitted, and that is our Sunday evening sing. My wife was a music teacher before I married her, and the first real money I ever made with my own business I put into a good piano. She has a sweet voice that does not get any worse for me as the years go by. Fortunately, all our children are passionately fond of music. The Younger Boy would rather scrape away at a fiddle than eat. And the Girl—you ought to have heard her sing. I can't tell it without tears in my pen, but Sunday night, the first one

after she left us, when we tried to have our sing—well, we all went to pieces and were almost afraid to renew it when the next Sunday came around. But we did, because we knew the Girl did not want us to grieve or lose any of the home customs that were dear to her.

Well, Sunday at our house, comes to an end happily and we believe healthily. Sometimes after the sing, before we all go up-stairs, we have a visit with some old friends that we have invited in to sing with us. The children have some of their playmates who live near by come in for some happy and even jolly talk. The old habit of Western New York clings to us, of thinking of Sunday ending with Sunday at sundown, and I think sometimes some of our neighbours have been a little puzzled to hear laughter and jolly singing in our house Sunday nights after church.

Oh, yes, I forgot about the Sunday paper. We do read it along in the afternoon and evening. But I noticed always when the Girl was with us she never seemed to care for any part of it. And I don't think she was any less well informed next day than any of the rest.

I expect that this way of spending Sunday must seem rather dull and uninteresting to you and to a good many others who may read this reply to your letter. But it never seems dull to us. Oh, yes, and about another meal. We have just a bite of lunch, generally when we get back from church, a sandwich and a glass of milk, and the rule generally is that each member of the family gets what he wants

out of the pantry and does his own dishwashing and cleaning up afterwards. It seems more like a scramble than it really is.

Of late years, after the Girl's absence, we quite often close the day with a brief prayer of thanks for the day, and in memory of her, we feel that in some beautiful way she knows what we are doing, or if she doesn't, on account of the fact that she is so happy and satisfied over there, we feel better for closing the day of rest with a thought of her and a prayer that we may be kept worthy of meeting her.

The way we spend Sunday may not suit your conditions at all. It is not always the same, of course, but in general we go by these three rules. Sunday is made for the human race for these three things: REST, WORSHIP, SERVICE.

Whatever use of Sunday gives us those three things, we think is a good use of the day. That is the way we try to spend it, and we find as the years go by, that after spending it that way we have a lot of change left. It is refreshing to have in the life one day different from the rest. And we say that if this nation will spend Sunday in some such way as to get rest and enjoy worship and give service to others we need never fear going the way of those countries that have desecrated the Day that God made for man.

XVI

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

THOSE who have been interested enough in the Mere Man to follow him so far must have thought sometimes that he was dealing with some very trifling and superficial matters which he called "problems." Compared with some you yourselves have had, or are having, the things he has talked about must have seemed pretty small.

Well, that is the way they seem to the Mere Man himself, as he looks back at them after an experience which is so much greater than any he had experienced. And I have hesitated a long time before relating what I am now going to tell you, but I have thought that if my narrative will help any others who are passing through the same crisis, I would ignore my own sensitive shrinking from saying anything about it.

You will remember, perhaps, that whenever I have spoken of the Girl it has always been with the greatest pride and satisfaction. And in fact the Girl has been a source of constant joy to her mother and me from the time of her birth. And she had such a fund of exuberant health! Never a headache nor a "nervous spell" nor a "moody spell," two spells which have seemed to me sometimes to spell a bad temper as well as a bad stomach.

And she was good without being disagreeable, which some church members I know have never learned to be. She did not care for dances, many of which she frankly criticised to her schoolmates as vulgar and immoral. And yet, with all that, no girl in the school was more popular or respected. The High School boys in her class all tried to win her favour, and more than one of them, we think now, thought he was very much in love with her, but she never permitted them any liberties, was always frankly good-natured with them, and in most of her studies surpassed them. For all of which they honoured her and showed it by their attitude when in her presence.

In that connection I remember how her mother and I felt when, one day at the table, after school, the Younger Boy said carelessly, "Isn't it queer, mother, the only girl in school that the fellows take their hats off for is Sister." It was a little thing, perhaps, but the Girl's mother blushed as if she were the Girl herself, and I went back in memory to my courting days, when I did the same thing to my wife, who commanded the same respect, for the same reason.

Well, I am rather slowly leading up to my experience, or rather the experience of the whole family, because although it all happened some time ago, it seems as if only yesterday. And I can hardly pull myself together to tell what it all was, and how it affected us all in ways that we don't know how to measure yet, and may not know how to measure for a long time to come.

The Girl had been in unusual spirits, owing to the way her basket-ball team at the school had played that afternoon, winning over a Y. W. C. A. group that had never before been beaten. I remember that evening how she came over to where I sat and made good-natured fun over a new neck-tie I was wearing, and promised to knit me a better one. And when I told her I would wear any tie she could make, no matter how badly it fitted my complexion, she pretended that she was going to make the tie out of an old pair of carpet slippers which I was fond of and which my wife hid away whenever she could get them out of the box where I kept them. How all these light touches of the familiar home circle smite on our hearts now, and yet.

Then, as she was starting up to her room the Younger Boy waylaid her.

"Oh, Sis," we heard him say, "help me out with my Cæsar, won't you! What did he want to build bridges for, anyhow?"

"Don't cross them until you come to them," his sister said good-naturedly.

"But I have come to them. And I can't make head or tail out of the stuff. Help me out, won't you?"

"Of course I will," the Girl said. And she sat down at once and in a few minutes she had gone over the famous passage of the bridge and made it so clear that the Younger Boy smiled as he finally shut his book and shied it across the room triumphantly.

"You're a trump," he said as the Girl rose to go up-stairs to her room; "do the same for you on your Math." For the Girl was not strong on mathematics and the Boy was.

We remember that when the Girl had gone up-stairs the Older Boy, who had been reading in the library, came into the sitting-room where the rest of us had been and said to my wife, "Mother, did you notice how tired Sister looked when she came in tonight?"

"Tired!" said my wife. "She never looks tired."

"But she did, tonight," persisted her brother. "The basket-ball is too hard for her."

"Why, she is a perfect animal," I said positively. "She's stronger than either of you fellows."

"Maybe she is, but I say she looked tired to me when she came in," was his reply.

We remembered it afterwards.

Early next morning I was suddenly awakened by a movement in the Girl's bedroom. My wife was in there talking, and pretty soon she came to the door and her face had a great look of fear.

"The Girl is very ill," she said. "We must have the doctor at once!"

Ill! The Girl! And we had thought her immune from all disease! I rushed to the 'phone and called up our family doctor, although since my wife's last illness, some long time ago, we had not called him in, except for a social evening.

When he came, he said one word: "Pneumonia."

Then he asked questions. We found afterwards from some of the basket-ball players that at the game the day before, the girls had not been careful, as they should have been after their violent exercise, but had gone outdoors to have a photograph taken, and for some reason there had been delay, causing them to stay out in the cold a long time. But whatever the cause, the Girl, who had never known disease, was now in its grip, and we stood by, during those following days, with grim fear and terror snatching at our hearts.

I don't think any of us realised as the slow days crept on what the final result might be. The last thing any of us ever thought of was that Death could ever come into our family circle. Every day we read accounts of accidents and deaths and funerals in the town, but, like most people, we never allowed for any such event in our own home. And if we had ever given it a serious thought, the Girl was the last one we would have thought of as liable to die. She was so young, so healthy, so vitally interested in life, so companionable, so fit to grow up into an ideal home-maker, so universally beloved, it did not seem possible that she could ever die, not even after she had grown old. Sometimes I had actually found myself wondering if it might not be possible for the Girl in some way to miss dying altogether and be translated in some miraculous manner. And I found out afterwards that my wife had also had the same curious thought.

The day the Girl finally left us is a day we shall never forget in our home. She had seemed to

be passing the crisis, and had regained strength enough to whisper a word. Then the swift change had come. The doctor was present and the boys had been called home from school. And we all stood there, waiting, waiting.

My wife, who had borne up wonderfully all through those terrible weeks, was kneeling there by the bed, with the Girl's hand in both of her own. The boys were sitting there close by, tearfully gazing at that one in awe and grief, seeing death for the first time in their young lives. And I was standing there by the side of the doctor, down whose cheeks tears were raining. But I could not cry. It seemed to me as if God had left His world and was punishing us somewhere out of pure malice. And my eyes were dry, and my heart was hard.

Then my wife beckoned me to come up closer.

"She wants you," she said. I went up and kneeled down, and it seemed to me, as I did so, that everything in my universe went to pieces.

"Father, Mother, Boys, don't cry. I am going to be happy in that other home."

It was the faintest whisper, but we caught it, my wife and I, and it was the last. When we had kneeled there a little longer, the doctor gently raised us up and performed the last duties, and covered the sweet face, and we went into the other room with the boys and sat down, dazed and bewildered, and still thinking it could not be.

But it was a fact, and as the days passed, and business and housekeeping and school had to go on,

it seemed to me cruel that all these every-day commonplaces had to be a part of the day's program, and almost like an insult to the Girl's memory. For woven into that memory were visions of days that followed her death.

We had the funeral services at the house, although many requests came from her friends to hold them in the church. But both my wife and I had always been brought up to believe that occasions like weddings and funerals, and even christenings, should be observed in the home circle. I can't recall, or I shrink from recalling, the details of that service, only I can not help seeing the picture of that great group of High School students that gathered outside the house, and stood there as the body was carried out to the hearse. For the first time in the history of our town the entire High School was adjourned for a funeral of one of its members. And three of the girls and three of the boys out of her class were the pallbearers. My wife had asked that no flowers be sent to the house, but out at the cemetery the flowers around the grave made a mound of beauty, and the High School girls afterwards took them to the hospital and the Orphans' Home. Because, they said, the Girl would have done that.

Our Pastor came and said and did the regular things. I believe, as I think back over it, that without knowing it, he said and did the right thing, knowing all the time that as far as I was concerned my heart and mind were dead to any word of comfort or sympathy. There was one moment during

the service at the grave when it seemed to me my heart would melt and I might be allowed the joy of tears. But it passed, and when we went back to the empty house, I went up into my den and sat down and asked God like a coward, if I might die.

I am relating, just as it occurred, the experience just as it affected me. I can look back on it now with mingled feelings of sorrow and chagrin. Where was the faith I had confessed as a Christian in a risen Lord? What had become of the profession I had made as a believer in Him Who said, "In my Father's house are many mansions?" I was repudiating them all, and instead of being a tower of strength to my wife, and to the boys, who were overpowered with their sudden loss, I was making it harder, as the days went on, for the entire household, to sustain itself in the right kind of living.

Our Pastor called and offered his word of sympathy. I do not believe any man on earth could have been more helpful. I know that my wife treasured his words and spoke of them to me with floods of happy tears. It is a mistake to think that the words of spoken or written sympathy at times of death do very little good. They are welcomed like water in a parched land, by the sorrowing, and often when they seem to fall on deadened hearts, afterwards they are recalled with healing effect. It would be a dreadful thing if at times like ours, there was no human friendship or religious hope, even if the words are faltering and offered in the old ways. They are of tremendous value. I found

them so, and am thankful that I have had the grace of late to tell my pastor how much he helped me over those dark times, even if he thought he spoke in vain.

I don't remember exactly at what moment I came out of my despair and hardness, but as I recall it, one evening my wife, who had astonished us all by her cheerful and courageous bearing all through the event, was looking over the Girl's belongings, in her room, and she came across a small book that had a few of the Girl's notes, jotted down from day to day. She did not keep a regular diary, but was in the habit of putting down a thought now and then, saying to the boys, laughingly, that she was going to be an author and send her first story to the *Atlantic Monthly*, because she believed in beginning at the top.

These words my wife found in the little book, and in the evening as we were sitting alone in the Girl's room she read them to me: "I love life, because it is so beautiful. I want to live to see my own home. I want to live to help others have better homes. There is nothing I love so much as my own home, my father, mother, and the boys. And I sometimes have a thought that if anything should happen to call me away from this home that I love so much, I would be allowed to go into that other life, and——"

The sentence, curiously enough, stopped right there, as if the Girl had been interrupted at that point in the writing, and had not thought it worth while to finish it.

But as my wife stopped at that point, something in my breast seemed to break. I laid my head on my wife's shoulder and cried. It is always hard for a grown-up man to cry real tears. But the trouble with me, a Mere Man, was that I had not let the good God have any tears to wipe away. And there in the evening, in the Girl's room sacred through association, with the dear possessions that spoke to us as if she were there with us, at that moment I passed out of hardness of heart into a warm and living faith and a joy in the future that I had never before known.

I wonder why it is that the event of Death reminds us of Life. If Death were such an enemy as we sometimes say he is, could he or would he remind us of life? And yet as the days go by I am more and more impressed with the tremendous fact that every time any one dies the world is reminded, not of death, but of life. Not of time, but of eternity. Not of self, but of God.

Later that evening, when the Boys had come home, my wife gently called attention to certain books that had belonged to the Girl, and asked the Boys if they would take some of them over to the school library. They were books that she had sometimes said might be of great use there, and once had told her mother that if she went away to college down east she would like to have them put in the High School.

The Boys went into the Girl's room and quietly gathered up the books, and we could hear them crying as they did so. But my wife and I, sitting in

our room close together, began to talk as we had not done since the Girl died, about her characteristics. And we found ourselves talking cheerfully. Then my wife said, and her face glowed as it never had even in her happy maidenhood, so that she reminded me of the Girl herself: "John, we must never forget what she said, the last time she spoke when she called you to her, 'Father, Mother, Boys, don't cry. I am going to be happy in that other home.' She is there now, happy."

And as the days go by, days of work and play, days of drudgery and burden-bearing, days of loneliness, we do not forget. There are times when it seems to us the Girl seems to come smiling into the room where she so often came to shed her sunny spirit like rays of living light all over us. But we do not need to have her come in actual presence to prove to us that she is still alive. We know she is, and that she is happy. For we have the assurance of the Master who could not lie, "In my Father's house are many mansions," ("or homes"). There are no clocks in heaven, and no reckoning of earthly time. So the Girl does not think any time has elapsed since she left us. She is waiting for us, but she is busy somewhere doing the will of the Master, Whom she loved here. And she is happy in that other Home. And we can go our ways, helping to make other people's homes happy until we all meet at last in that other Home, never more to say "Good-bye."

XVII

THE MERE MAN AND HIS MONEY

MY father began his ministry (I forgot to say at the beginning of this narrative that my father was a minister) in a small town in New England and he moved about some, having during his lifetime six different pastorates. At no time during his service to the church did he receive more than fifteen hundred dollars a year. And on that amount as a maximum, and on much less most of the time, he supported my mother and five children and never went in debt, and never lost the respect of the different parishes he served.

I never saw my mother poorly dressed, nor my father looking shabby. To this day I don't know how they did it. I mean keeping up all the living expenses of a family of seven, clothing and feeding and housing that many persons until the children began to be old enough to earn a little themselves. They say sometimes that ministers are poor financiers. But if J. Pierpont Morgan or John D. Rockefeller could do more on less than fifteen hundred dollars a year and keep a family of seven looking and feeling respectable, they would have to be bigger managers of the dollar than any financiers I ever saw. Judging financiers by my father's performance, I count them a

pretty poor lot, and take off my hat to my father every time.

It is, therefore, with this sort of heritage and example that I began my own making and spending and saving of money.

I find as I go on in life that money is one of the greatest factors in the program. I mean that people of every sort are thinking money and wishing money and discussing money and letting money play one of the major parts in the great drama of human existence. We all have to have it in order to get anything to eat and wear and read and pay bills, and nothing else seems to take its place. It's like an appetite. Up to the present time nothing seems to satisfy an appetite except just food. And nothing seems to satisfy the average man's wants and needs like money.

I won't go into the struggles I had to make a living before I had a family of my own, because that is a rather long story, and these plain talks I am having with those who are listening to me began with my own home. So I will skip over a good many chapters when I was a young clerk in a store, and give some account of how I spend and save my money now that I am a married man and have a family to support.

I have never had a larger income than thirty-five hundred dollars a year, and for several years after I was married I had a good deal less. But one of the great good fortunes that came to me when I married was my wife. She is one of the kind that keeps a man out of debt when he is tempted to get

high-priced furniture and things when he doesn't have the money to pay for it. And she was also one of those women who love the home so much that she was willing to deny herself the things that most women love in the matter of pretty and expensive clothes and luxuries for the house and the table.

All through our married life I owe my wife more than I ever owed the grocer or the dressmaker. In fact she never would let me run up accounts with either. And in the plain account I am now going to give of our expenses as a family, I want it to be distinctly understood that if anyone has credit for the way we have managed our affairs financially, my wife must have the largest share, because she is not only more economical than I am, but she is also more far-sighted and unselfish.

At the beginning of our married life I did what so many other husbands do, and doled out to my wife at intervals small sums that I supposed she might need for her own expenses or to help in the house accounts. But after a somewhat trying time of it, we adopted a different policy in regard to money matters and I shared a certain definite part of my income with my wife and relieved her of great embarrassment in the purchase of certain things necessary for the home as well as for her own needs and her own philanthropy.

It was during that period of shaking up of old financial methods, that I learned that my wife was a tither. That is, I found, to my astonishment, that she set aside, as a sacred sum for religious and philanthropic causes, one-tenth of all the money

that came into her hands from time to time. And after we had readjusted our money arrangements so far as the household expenses were concerned, my wife proposed to me that I adopt the same habit and set aside one-tenth of my salary for religious causes.

"But that will mean three hundred and fifty dollars a year!" I said aghast.

She was very calm about answering.

"I know it will, but you will always have something definite to give to human welfare causes and in the end the rest of the money will have a spending power that always goes with tithing," she said. And the absolute certainty with which she said it was an eye-opener to any agent of oil stock who is eloquently putting up the claims of his "absolutely" safe gusher.

We had a heart-to-heart talk over the matter and my wife showed me the Bible promises to tithers about how God will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing so that we can not be able to receive it. And the long and short of it is that we adopted the tithing system right there.

And let me tell you, on the word, not only of a Mere Man, but on the authority of Malachi as well, that in some miraculous manner the tithing plan does all that Malachi and my wife say it will. We have never lacked money to give to the church and to human welfare, and somehow the balance of the salary has seemed to be always sufficient for our household needs and we have never had to go in debt or borrow at the bank or mortgage our little

home. I wonder as the years go on why more Christian people don't learn this little financial plan of Malachi's. It seems to be perfectly sound, and as I occasionally meet other tithers I find that without exception every one of them is in just the same condition as we are in money matters. I have yet to find one who is not happy over the tithing plan.

Well, now to come to the plain and homely matter of how we spend the thirty-one hundred and fifty dollars left from the thirty-five hundred dollars I get yearly.

First, we own our house and the land on which it is built. I had saved up enough from my store clerking, before I asked my wife to help me make a home, to buy two lots on the edge of the town at a time when land was not very high, and I put up a three-room cottage to start with, doing some of the work on it myself. When we moved into it the day we were married, I did not owe a dollar and had a few left in the bank. Of course I am not telling all this to set up a model of how to do it, only relating my experience.

As our family grew and my salary went up a little, I added more rooms until the house we are now living in is a comfortable seven-room building, large enough for us and not too large to keep up or protect with a modest amount of insurance.

I find, in looking over the items that different members of the family have kept, that our clothes bill for the entire family when we were all together and the children were all dependent on my earnings, averaged something like four hundred dollars a

year. There were years when this amount was exceeded. There were other years when three hundred dollars covered all the items of clothing, including bed furnishings and table linen and extra suits for the boys' gymnasium and football and athletic garments.

The item of expense that calls for most thought and care in our family has been the item of food. My wife is a strict vegetarian, and I have come to care very little for a heavy meat diet. In fact both of us can get on very well without eating any meat at all the year round. During most of the years when our children have been dependent on my earnings, meat has been very expensive. The Girl, while she was living, like her mother, did not care for meat. The Older Boy was very fond of it, and the Younger did not seem to care one way or the other. As nearly as I can figure out the expense for food for the five members of our family, it has averaged annually within five hundred dollars. That will seem like a large amount to some families of five and it will seem moderate to other families of five. But I am not telling about other people's expenses, only my own. Food prices in our town have been pretty high compared with other towns. If you knew where we lived you might understand why.

For fuel we spend about one hundred dollars a year. For the items of gas, electricity, telephone, ice, water, and incidentals the cost, as near as I can figure from my expense account, has been seventy-five dollars.

When I was a tobacco user my annual bill was two hundred dollars. Looking over this item about the time I made the agreement with my son to give up my cigars if he would give up his pipe, I was surprised to find what the amount was. Since I gave up the smoking I have reckoned that two hundred dollars a year good for a dozen other legitimate home expenses.

After I had been married ten years, I began to feel the stress of my business and our doctor advised golf in order to keep down my increasing weight and prevent slumping down into middle old age. So I joined the least expensive club in town, and paid one hundred and fifty dollars a year dues. My golf material was about one hundred dollars additional, including suits and balls and sticks and so forth. But after playing the game for five years I quit, and I now get my exercise in other ways. But for the sake of the total we will include those golf items.

The children's school expenses varied from year to year. The Older Boy's college tuition was one hundred and fifty dollars a year for four years. The Girl paid nearly all her own High School expenses by working in the school caf  teria. The Younger Boy was rather hard on athletics and I find I used to spend considerable on baseball and football stuff, and also quite a sum on High School parties. I gave each of the children a regular allowance, and demanded that each one of them keep a strict itemised account, which they did. I am sure that all the money expense of the Girl and the

Younger Boy for all school outlay annually did not exceed one hundred dollars.

The automobile cost us fifteen hundred dollars. It was the largest single item one year. I was able to pay it from accumulated savings. We still have the car and use it every day. But I am still a little in doubt as to the wisdom of getting it. The one thing we keep it for is my wife's pleasure, and also it has been an item in helping to keep her in better health.

Our doctor's bills one year were very heavy. That was the time when every member of the family had to turn in and do housework because we could get no housekeeper. I think for sickness and necessary medical service our yearly expense has been around two hundred dollars. This includes nurses and outside help.

Our amusements have cost us something, but not to exceed one hundred dollars a year. Comparing this with some of our neighbours' totals I find it small. One of my neighbours complained to me the other day that his four children spend on the movies at least three hundred dollars a year.

I like good books and we spend annually on books and magazines and pictures an average of one hundred and fifty dollars. This seems a good sum, but my wife says, and I think quite sensibly, that the best investment we can make for ourselves and our children is intelligence and religion.

For my insurance premiums, the upkeep of the car, and the dues I have to pay on Rotary and a Reading Club and the Chamber of Commerce and

one or two other societies to which I belong, together with necessary help for my wife about the house whenever we have such service, I reckon on a lump sum of two hundred dollars a year. House service in our town is high when we can get it. It is so high that most of the time we have done without it.

Counting in all the items as listed I find that it amounts to twenty-four hundred and twenty-five dollars a year. This does not include the three hundred and fifty set aside as tithes. That leaves seven hundred and twenty-five dollars to put into the bank. In the sum total of annual expenses I have added in the amounts I spent during the years I belonged to the golf club and also the amount I spent for tobacco. Since giving up both these habits I count those items as practically put into the bank.

I don't mean to say that every year I put seven hundred and twenty-five dollars into the bank. There have been years when I did not put a dollar into the bank and came near to borrowing. There were other years when I saved on my income nearly one thousand dollars, and met all expenses. But up to the present time I have not borrowed money nor had to mortgage the house to buy a car.

Of course I am aware that some of those who read this account of my money spending will laugh at the amounts, and write in to tell me that on salaries or wages of less than two thousand dollars a year they have brought up bigger families and done just as well by them. I know that such is

probably the case with many families all over this country. I am not giving the story of their financial doings, but of my own. I am sure we could live more economically than we do. I am also sure we could give more to human welfare and take it off some of the unnecessary outlay. I am trying to save enough to keep me from being a burden to my children and to others. And I am willing to admit that up to the present time I have not yet learned what my wife often calls the "stewardship of God's wealth." I am not a very good steward, yet I hope to learn better as the years go by how to spend and save God's money.

XVIII

WHAT THE WAR DID TO HIS BOY

WHEN I began this series of family confessions our Older Boy was in college, and the Younger Boy and the Girl were in High School. You may also recall the account of the Boy's final determination to become a medical missionary, to our great surprise, but afterwards to our pride. While the Boy was on his last year in his college course, looking forward with much interest to going on with his medical training, the whole thing was broken in two by America's entrance into the war and the calling of the draft.

I am now going to tell my little bit of war experience as it came into our home through the Boy, who, like thousands of other college boys, volunteered at once, went into training camp, and afterwards overseas, where he served for two years in the Ambulance Corps.

Some of the things I am going to relate will make some of you angry, but I am going to tell them because at the risk of seeming to break a silence that many good people seem to think we should preserve for the sake of what they call "patriotism," I believe that the real results of war are so fundamental to be known by the next generation that these things ought to be told.

Enough has been said about the way our boys did their bit over there, and also the great "hurrah" and hysterics when they finally came home. I am not going to stop over that. I am at present more interested in what the war did to my Boy than I am about what he did while he was away.

For, as the excitement of the home-coming died down a little, my wife and I began to notice certain things about the Boy that we had not seen before. He had reached home in June, just after his college had closed, so there were nearly four months before the opening of college in the fall.

"I don't know just what I want to do, Dad," he said to me one evening after coming home from a dance and a social event where a Girls' Club had entertained the "heroes." "You see I lost two good years out of my course, and I don't feel very strong about going on again."

I sat there facing him, really somewhat bowled over by what he said, because his mother and I had taken it for granted he would go on. But before I felt like making any reply, he went on, with a curious hesitation that finally changed into the most astonishing confidence he had ever exhibited. He had come in with a cigarette (a habit he had never acquired when he went away), and he threw the small end of it into the empty fireplace and said, as I noted the act, "One of the girls lighted it for me as I left her house, and kindly put it into my mouth. Dad, you don't wonder, do you, that I don't care to talk about the War? I want to forget the whole business. But the folks here at home

don't understand. These girls, now——" (he choked up and when he resumed he was savage in tone and gesture) "they don't understand. We came back, some of us did, ready to be decent again after the hell we'd been through, and all that the girls and women of this town think we want is dances and jazz music, and to 'entertain' us heroes (?) with risqué stories. And the way the girls dress——"

He pulled up, and I shall never forget the look of complete disgust that came over his face. The Boy had always had a genuine scorn and contempt for anything that suggested indelicacy or immodesty, due to the influence and example of his sister, the Girl, and as he went on, I was almost terrified at his outburst.

"Dad, the girls must be crazy to dress that way," he said. "And they insist on leaving their corsets in their dressing rooms. They actually tempt the boys, even if they don't mean to, about as bad as they were tempted over there. It seems as if the American girls, even in the High School, don't think of anything except dances and face-paint and silly talk to 'entertain' us heroes! It sounds awful, Dad, but some of the fellows who kept their heads over there are pretty near being shoved over the brink here at home by the home folks who ought to know better. And when it comes to the jazz music and jazz foolishness generally it is enough to sicken."

Again he pulled up and then, with another look, he said: "About this 'hero' slush, Dad. Do you

wonder I don't want to wear the Distinguished Service Medal they pinned on me? It's because I never earned it."

I surely was knocked down by that, because the Boy's mother and I had never had a prouder moment than when he wrote home of being decorated for gallant action. And when he came down out of that train around which the whole town had gathered, with the medals across his uniform, looking so handsome and distinguished, my wife and I just swelled right up with pride and self-congratulation.

But before I could pick myself together to ask him what he meant he went on: "I didn't want to disappoint mother, and I don't want her to know. But it was just like this. I was out with the car and my Buddy, picking up wounded, when we stumbled on a blind shell hole, and up popped five Germans, holding up their hands and surrendering, before I had time to say 'Wie Gehts!' But insisted that I take them into the lines while he stayed by the car, and the five Germans followed me like kittens running after a bowl of cream. They were starved to death, and tickled to death to be made prisoners in order to get something to eat. And for that daring deed of bravery, Dad, they pinned the Distinguished Service Medal on my proud chest! And I couldn't refuse very well. Lots of that sort of thing was done. Do you wonder I don't want to see the medals again? Or ever wear them? I loathe the whole dirty thing. I was never a hero.

I did only what thousands of others did in going out with my car.

"It takes a million more kinds of courage for us fellows to keep clean in thought when we go to these dances and look at these half-clad girls than it ever did to go over the top. If some of the fellows I know come through this summer with credit they ought to be decorated with all the medals of honour known to mankind for astounding bravery in the face of terrific onslaught on their passions. And the thing that galls me, Dad, is the fact that the society of this town of ours has no ideals for us higher than the dance and the movies and the jazz."

I sat there listening to this unusual outburst, unable to say a word. It was so unlike anything the Boy had ever done before that I was simply disconcerted. But he had got to going and seemed as if he wanted to clean up his mind on the subject, and he went on.

"How would you like to spend one of these 'entertaining' evenings us 'heroes' are getting these days, Dad, just to see how the thing is done? And then I would like to show you a real hero, and also show you how much the country shows its gratitude for one of the boys who went over whole and came back broken."

I didn't know at the time what I was going into, but I was curious to know about the thing, and especially the last item, and I promised. So a few nights later, the Boy said he was going with a bunch of the fellows to a line party, first to the

movies and then over to a public dance hall for the regular evening's frolic.

I don't care to describe that evening's experience in detail. The girl the Boy took to the movies seemed a good deal surprised that he had his Dad along with them, but she accepted the situation with more or less show of good grace. I don't recall the picture in detail, except to remember that it was not as bad as some; but a vaudeville act which preceded it was so vulgar that I knew if the Girl had been alive and present she would have gone out, and taken the rest of the audience with her. And as we went across the street with a crowd of young people pouring over to the dance hall, I could not help wondering at the business greed and utter lack of respect for common moral life that attached to the theatrical profession, calling to mind what one of the greatest dramatic critics in New York had said in the press that very morning: "The theatre, in America, and the entire dramatic business was never at so low an ebb for ability and purpose as it is at this moment."

The dance, as I stood back in a corner and looked at it, justified all the bitter criticism the Boy had made of it. I found myself shrinking back in horror as the half-clad girls went whirling by embracing their partners, and I shut my eyes after seeing in the faces of the young men, the plain announcement of their debased thought. When the Boy went by once or twice I caught a look of disdain on his face as if he were saying to himself: "What a fool I am to be here!"

But at the same time, I also feared. Why was he there? What lure drew him? In spite of his noble nature, and all that his mother and sister meant to him, what was the allurements in that glitter of sensuous surroundings? And the so-called music made me sick. I think I would have actually been nauseated if I had been compelled to remain all the evening, and yet these young folks danced there in that passion-swayed atmosphere until two o'clock in the morning.

The Boy found some excuse that was satisfactory to the girl, to leave the hall before midnight, and almost without a word, he asked me to go with him to our leading hotel. When we went into the lobby only a few guests were about. The Boy went at once over to the elevator and, with a gesture, motioned me in, and as he followed, and the car started to the top of the house, he said to the elevator boy or man, "Roddy, this is my father. You heard me speak of him often. I want you to meet him. In fact that is what we came in for. After taking us up you may take us down again."

Roddy looked up pleasantly and said: "I'll shake hands when we get down." When we were down, he held out his left hand. Then I noticed that his right hand was gone. Also that one eye was missing. I shook Roddy's hand somewhat mechanically, I fear, and after an awkward word, a guest entered the elevator and the Boy and I said good-night and started for home.

"And that, Dad, is the way a grateful country,

and this state in particular, honours and rewards one of the real 'heroes' of the war," said the Boy. "Roddy was a barbed-wire cutter. There wasn't any more dangerous work than that. He ran rusty barbs into his palm and the hand had to come off. He lost his eye at the same time. You may remember that Roddy was employed in the State House as an expert bookkeeper in the treasurer's department. But while he was away losing his hand and his eye in the service of his country, his place was given to a political jobber. So Roddy runs a hotel elevator at forty dollars a month. And there are a lot more."

That was about all that the Boy said that night. But when I left him at the door of his bedroom, I felt that one thing the war had done for my son among other things was to make him sore with his country and with those who at the time he went overseas had shouted so patriotically over him and his companions, and after giving him a few hurrahs and dances and "entertainments" coolly forgot him and the rest and went their ways into the same old world they had always known, of selfish seeking.

I think it was about a week after this event that I was wakened suddenly out of a sound sleep by a loud talking in the Boy's room. I went across the hall and opened his door and heard the most astounding and terrible dialogue:

"Put his head over there! Look out! You're stepping on it! Kick that foot out! Throw the —— beggar in here so we won't go under!—Let

go of me! Come on in! The water's fine! Too many —— Boches in it to make good paving!"

And as I listened I was suddenly aware of my wife standing there by my side, her face ghastly white as the profanity poured forth, and the whole beastly fact slowly sank into our hearts that the Boy was going over what we had fearfully read small accounts of—the horrible, unbelievable wading of our boys through the filthy trenches, at the bottom of which *were dead and mutilated bodies of both Germans and our own, on which our boys were treading to keep their heads above the slime of mud and blood!*

And the Boy has not yet made up his mind what he will do. His ambition seems to be sapped. We wonder sometimes if shell shock can account for it. He says when we question him, not knowing we heard the horrible talk in his sleep, "It's just war shock. I don't know that I'll ever get over it. It was just two years of hell. Let me forget it!"

One evening late, when the Boy was out somewhere, I stepped over to his room to get a book he had taken out of my bookcase, and as I started to go in, I saw his mother kneeling by the Boy's bed, and I knew she was there by the bed where she had kneeled so often when the Boy was a baby, praying the good God to make an honest, pure, useful Christian man of him.

She did not hear me, and I stepped softly back to my den. And as I kneeled by my own chair to join my feeble prayer with hers, I prayed that I might have faith in my wife's prayers for the

Boy. And I am going on to believe that no matter what the war did to my Boy and to thousands of others, it is not so terrible a thing that the prayers of a good mother cannot wipe it away and leave not even a fearful night memory of that awful tragedy!

XIX

THE MERE MAN AND PERSONAL LIBERTY

IT has taken me a long time to find out that a man's home does not exist apart from other institutions like the Church, business, education and the state. A family cannot have a real existence apart from these things. It must share its life with the life of the world, if it would have a real life of its own.

I had not been married many years when I discovered that it made a good deal of difference with the possible happiness of my home if my neighbours' homes were unhappy. And I also learned that I could not very well separate the fortunes and doings of my family from those of every other family in the town.

As the years went by and our children were born and began to grow up, my wife and I began to find out that every human event touched in some way every life in our little circle. We were a part of the history of the whole world. We could not escape that connection if we wanted to. And after a while we saw that the whole thing was part of the mighty purpose of the Divine to keep us from the most intense selfishness and self-seeking. Gradually it grew upon us that if we would create and maintain

a really worth-while home of our own, we could not neglect the welfare of any other person.

I am quite sure all this did not come to us suddenly, but we learned it from the experiences we were constantly having.

I have already told you how we became involved in the affairs of one of our neighbours, and how my wife and I had the great pleasure of seeing almost the entire family come into our church through our word and influence. The history of our neighbour's family therefore became, in a true sense, a part of the history of ours.

You will remember also, perhaps, how the death of the Girl knit us up in sympathy with a great host of other people, so that this tremendous experience that came to our family circle revealed to us the other circles all about ours who remembered us at that time of trial. I did not go into all those details when I related the event of the Girl's going on into that other home where she told us she was going to be happy. But as the days have come on since, my wife and I see how imperfect any home would be if it tried to exist apart from all the rest of society.

But a recent experience, which I believe is very vitally related to the common welfare and future shaping of the entire national life, again has emphasised for me this fact that our home is bound up with every other in this republic. If in any way, as I tell it, you feel as if it were in any way exaggerated or overdrawn, I hope you will read it again and not make a snap judgment on it. I am

going to relate the thing exactly as it occurred, and whether you reach the same conclusions that I did or not, I am sure you will at least give me credit for telling the truth.

I am in the habit, like most business men, of reading a part of my morning paper before I go down-town to the store. I don't always read the scandals or the society columns, or the divorce trials or the crime stories, or even the editorials. But a few mornings ago, the heading of an editorial caught my eye and I read the thing clear through. I give it here just as it appeared in our daily:

“FANATICAL PROHIBITION”

“National prohibition is a farce and worse. It is the laughing stock of three-fourths of the population and is conceded to be a failure even by those who succeeded by an appeal to fanatical minorities in getting the preposterous law passed which makes us the scorn of the world. It is one of the mysteries of national legislation which future historians will have difficulty in explaining how a national Congress could ever have been scared or coerced by a few feeble-minded and blue-nosed fanatics into passing the Eighteenth Amendment. The fanatics stampeded the Senate and House and in a fit of fear from no one knows what cause the law was passed.

“But this country is going to be ruled by majorities, not by a fanatical section of the people, and especially that section that wants to deprive the citizens of that inestimable jewel of existence, personal liberty. We predict that within the next five years the people of this country will rise up and repudiate this monstrous

invasion of personal liberty and repeal the Volstead Act by a big majority. Fanatics cannot rule this land. And especially a small group that succeeded, by a species of hypnotism in the political world, in getting the amendment passed. The freedom of the individual is guaranteed by the Constitution. That freedom is outraged by the Prohibitory enactment and its universal condemnation by all thoughtful and American citizens proves our statement that the law itself is already outlawed by the country. The six best cellars are those where a good supply of old Bourbon can be found, and the number is increasing rapidly in this good old town.

“In connection with this statement the Leader calls attention to a mass meeting slated for tomorrow night at the city hall to memorialize Congress for an act to amend the law and allow the manufacture and sale of wine and beer. Colonel Cork will preside. A number of our best citizens, including some of the clergy, have promised to take seats on the platform and enter protest against the national outrage of the attack on personal liberty as illustrated in the infamous Eighteenth Amendment.”

I don't know when I have read anything that roused my anger like this editorial. It was so full of distortion and untruth and so calculated to mislead the average reader who does not keep posted on the facts of national legislation that I was boiling over as I started down-town, half minded to call on the editor at his office, which was not far from my place of business.

But as I went out of our yard and stepped out on

the sidewalk, my neighbour who lives next door on our left, came along and joined me. I have already spoken of the neighbour who met with the tragedy of the automobile accident and the distress he felt over the disgrace attending that incident on account of the drunkenness of his son. And also the recovery of him and his wife through the winning of them to a religious hope.

But my neighbour on my left was an altogether different sort. I ought not to judge him, and I am not doing so when I state the fact that he was one of the careless-minded, self-admiring kind, what might be called a good-natured and happy-go-lucky fellow whenever things went to suit him, but with a different temper when he was losing money or an argument, as I had found out several times in casual meetings with him across our back yards.

He seemed very much pleased as he came along, and greeted me with a loud "Good morning, neighbour!" And then as we turned the corner and started down the avenue he said: "Did you read that editorial in the *Leader* this morning on 'Fanatical Prohibition'? That's what I call a corker. And the mass meeting tomorrow night is going to be another, especially with Colonel Cork presiding. That's what I call providential, eh?" And he laughed a loud and boisterous laugh that rattled up and down the street and caused several men to look over our way.

"Yes, I read it," I said. "And for misrepresentation of the facts about the enactment of the

Eighteenth Amendment it was not only a corker but a whole row of corks, supplied by the brewers."

My neighbour looked at me a moment. 'Then he burst out again: "Misrepresentation! 'The editorial spoke right out in meetin'. Every one knows that the fanatical bunch of prohibitionists put it over Congress. But this country is going to be ruled by majorities, not by a fanatical section of the people," he added, showing what effect the editorial had had on him as he quoted a sentence of it.

I was about to explode with a lot of historical facts on the progress of the prohibition movement which I had gathered from my favourite weekly paper, but as I looked at my neighbour I held my tongue. 'The more I thought of the useless arguments I had had with him on different subjects, the more I was convinced that if he were brayed in a mortar his foolishness would not depart from him.

We walked along another moment in silence, and then my neighbour said, with a knowing smile: " 'That was a good one the editorial got off on the 'six best cellars.' I know where one of 'em is, and plenty more of the good old stuff to keep it filled. I know one citizen of this republic who don't intend to let a minority of fanatics rob him of his personal liberty. After a while we won't be allowed to do anything without a special permit from the long-haired puritans. No prohibitory law is going to interfere with my taste for the good old heart-warming booze. No, sir!"

I parted from my neighbour down-town and went into the store, thinking a good deal. We had

passed by the newspaper office, but I restrained myself from my first impulse to go and see the editor. I said to myself that editors are unsatisfactory people to deal with because no matter what they print from the citizen they can always have the last word, and keep saying it every day. So I brooded over the whole thing all day and when I went home that night I had made up my mind to a course of action that you will perhaps not approve, but it seemed to me to be the thing to do, although when I spoke of it to my wife she seemed rather doubtful as to its wisdom. However, as she did not persuade me not to do it, I went ahead with my purpose, which was simply to go to the mass meeting that had been called in the interest of a protest against the Volstead Act, and then and there voice my convictions and give the audience some facts that the editorial had obscured and falsified.

When I went in at the time announced for the meeting the next evening, I found the city hall nearly filled. By the time I had found a seat down near the platform the hall was running over and many were standing. I looked over the aggregation on the platform and was relieved to note that none of our town's ministers was there, and learned afterwards that the statement in the editorial that some of the clergy would have seats on the platform was made up out of whole cloth, in the face of the fact that several of them had sent indignant letters of refusal to the invitations sent out to them to attend the meeting.

But as I looked over the crowd I was almost appalled to note the character of the audience. Scores of the people I knew in business, my acquaintances on the street, men and women in society in large numbers were there, and as speaker after speaker denounced the Volstead act and harped on the everlasting string of "personal liberty," I could not help wondering about the mental caliber of the average citizen who would cheer statements that called the Eighteenth Amendment a piece of legislation forced upon a free people by a small number of narrow-minded fanatics.

It was right after such a statement made by a business man, who had retired from the bottle business which used to be a thriving institution in our town, that I rose, because I could not hold myself in any longer.

If you knew me as I really am in this town you would understand what a sensation I caused as I began to speak. I am not a speaker at all, and in my own political party I have never gone out on a campaign to help elect even my favourite candidate. I am just a plain average plug citizen and I have never taken any personal part in public matters. A good many persons in the hall that night did not know me, but a good many more did. And I attribute to the fact that I had never before addressed a public audience the silence that fell over the presiding officer, Colonel Cork, and the others in charge of the meeting, and that I succeeded in getting as far with my speech as I did, without being called down or put out.

Before the meeting really waked up to the fact that I was speaking as a loyal citizen for the prohibitory law and its enforcement, I had got several facts out of my system, and some of them into the skulls of at least a few people in the meeting who were susceptible to facts. Something like the following, without any attempt to give the exact language I used, as I had nothing written down except the statistics:

“ Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen: I ask the privilege of saying a word on the prohibition question, as one of the citizens who has lived in this town all his life and has a home and a family as a part of this republic. And all I ask is the privilege of correcting some of the statements that have been made here, I suppose from a lack of knowledge of the real historic facts.

“ As a matter of fact the prohibitory law was not made a law of the United States of America by a small group of fanatics, as has been repeatedly stated here tonight. Before the prohibition question was brought to Congress it had already been discussed and acted upon by over thirty sovereign states, and prohibitive laws were passed by the people of those states. When the matter was brought before the Congress, prohibition received the solid vote of twenty-four states. Only four states—Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island—divided adversely to prohibition.

“ When the vote came to be taken in the Congress it stood in the Senate sixty-five to twenty for the amendment; in the House it stood two hundred

and eighty-one to one hundred and twenty-eight for prohibition.

"The statement has been made here tonight that if the soldier boys had been here at the time, the result would have been different. It certainly would. For in Ohio, prohibition originally carried by twenty-five thousand, but when the boys came home, Ohio ratified the amendment by two hundred and ninety thousand majority.

"I say, Mr. Chairman, that it is the solemn duty of the citizens of this republic to obey this law. Those who make home brew and buy liquor from the persons who make it are guilty of treason to the Constitution. The duty of every citizen is to acquaint himself with the facts which were misrepresented so grossly in the editorial in the *Leader* yesterday morning. I say——"

At that point someone cried, "Put him out!" Great confusion began all over the hall. A score of people were on their feet trying to speak. The excitement grew into more or less of a riot. I felt I had had my say and worked my way out of the hall by the front door, but as I neared the hallway the tumult died down a little as the entire crowd turned to look at me, and I fired one more shot as I turned around and shouted, for I think I was getting a little excited: "Better look up the facts about prohibition. It was made into a law of the land after years of education and it has come to stay for the material and moral well-being of every one in the Republic."

Then I went home, and told the story of the

evening to my wife and the Boys. They all laughed and the Older Boy said, "Dad, you're a trump!" My wife cried a little, but I could see smiles through her tears.

The Younger Boy got hold of the paper in the morning before I did. He read a long account of the meeting which called it a great success, and in a brief sentence said a fanatic (giving my name and house number) tried to break up the meeting, but was unsuccessful.

"Dad," said the boy, "you have broken into print in the *Leader*. If I were you I would reply to this report. It does not agree with what you told us last night."

"No," I said, after reading the account of the meeting. "I don't believe I'll reply. I got in my shot last night. Maybe some of it went home. But I don't mind saying, Boy, that your Dad has tasted blood, and I may go on the platform yet. And if I do——"

I did not finish that sentence, but all day down at the store I kept up a steady thinking, about what would happen to my home and all the homes of this country if all editors and all the people like those that were present at that meeting continued to be as ignorant and uninformed and lawless as they were.

"Personal liberty," I said, "is a great thing. But personal knowledge of the facts of history and personal obedience to the law have personal liberty bested by the earth's diameter."

XX

HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEF

I HAVE never tried to write out my creed by putting down what might be called different articles of my belief, but I need hardly say that I do believe certain things, and they are a part of my daily life, and they stand behind the things I do. They are wrapped up very closely with what people call conduct. But the other day I felt enough interested in the matter during a quiet period in my office at the store, to put down on a piece of paper the headings of what might be called my working creed.

It seems that there is no place where anyone can start a creed without mentioning first of all, God. I believe in Him, and from my earliest boyhood I have had some thought about a divine Being, and my picture of Him, I think, was given me by my mother, largely through the reading of the Bible. I have never been able to escape from that picture which my mind received. My God is very great, whenever I think of Him, and He is absolutely good in every way, but I think my early boyhood and young manhood had some picture of Him of sternness, which I have always connected with thoughts of justice. I have corrected that habit somewhat of late years, and I am now able to think

of the God in whom I believe as more benevolent than stern; more good, perhaps, than great; but in any sense He stands in my mind as a constant source of satisfaction because I always believe a God of that character is not going to be disappointed finally in the outcome of His creation. If He is both great and good, what we call the scheme of human life is not going to be finally thwarted and made into a blunder. This belief helps me over some very hard places, and it has been, as I say, a source of satisfaction. I believe God will never do any human being an injustice, and in a world of very great wrong and immense trouble, somehow or other I have always believed God would take care of it all and work it out to some victorious end. That is about as far as my thought of God goes, and it really amounts to leaving with Him the things I don't know how to answer as they come up to perplex me day after day. It is a fine thing to have Someone great enough and big enough and eternal enough, who knows the universe because He has made it—just as a man who has made a complicated piece of machinery is the only man who knows how to mend it when it is broken, or how to make a new one. My God is at least that Somebody who is powerful and who knows how to take care of the present, and especially of the future.

I think my next creed centers around the Person of Jesus Christ. I feel as if He were very near to every human being. I have never been able to think of Jesus as a Jew, but I somehow picture Him as one of my own race. I think of Him oftener than

my business acquaintances imagine, and I am frank to say, I do not hesitate to ask Him for help when I am in trouble. He seems to me like a very real person, and not someone who walked around here on this earth several hundred years ago. I expect that is a pretty good sign that He is alive, because so many other people beside myself have the same thought of Him. My belief in Jesus, I need hardly say, extends to my thought of Him as a Redeemer. He said He could forgive sins, and I have simply taken Him at His word, and I think I do not worry over that fact in my own life. Whenever I do anything wrong, I instantly think of Him as the great One who can forgive sin. I need hardly say that this connotes a belief in His divinity—in His being the Son of God. For none can forgive sin, save God alone. If I have any example to follow, He is the example. And perhaps the greatest pleasure I have ever known is in reading the story of His life—large parts of it at a time—always to ask the question about His own conduct: How He behaved, and what He said when He faced difficulties? He is my world Hero, and I have come to think of Him as I have grown older, as the greatest Statesman in the world, and I find great comfort in His creed of love to God and man. It means more to me—that does—than all these discussions called theology, and I am perfectly satisfied in my own mind that in the last great day there will be millions of people who will be found acceptable to Him from all nations of the world, because He is the World Man and the world Redeemer.

I think I can include in my creed honestly, faith in what is known as Christianity to finally overcome the evil of this world. I realise all the time it is a very imperfect world. It has in it selfishness of all kinds. There are injustice and cruelty and race hatred and war and crime and indifference to God, but in spite of it all I have great faith in the power of the teachings of Jesus to educate the world and bring it to God. If I did not have that faith I believe I would despair and call it a bad world on the whole. But I have become accustomed to thinking of two worlds in which I now live: The present one of the flesh, with its trouble and its struggle, and the other world which will be free from all these things. That is what Christianity means to me, as far as I have done.

I do not know that I am able to define the soul of man, but I feel quite certain that I have one. Of late I have come to think that all of me, without any separation of body or spirit, is that thing called soul. I find myself praying, not simply begging God for something, but talking with Him. That is one evidence to me that I have a soul. I have never heard scientists make any proof out of the laboratory of any being except human beings, who had the gift of prayer. Animals do not possess it, as we do, and the very fact that I cry out to God when I am in trouble, or talk with Him when I am not, is proof to me that there is something in me which is myself, and you can call it a soul, but it is immortal. When my body dies that part of me, which is the only part worth keeping, can not be destroyed.

I could not put down the articles of my faith without including my belief in immortality. I think, like the average man, I have a more or less fear of death. The men I meet, with whom I sometimes talk about religious things, express to me the same fear, and some of my men acquaintances are afraid of old age and sickness and loss of money. I used to have the same fear, but I am beginning to outgrow it, and to think of death as simply a natural thing, as natural as being born and as stepping into another existence with a wonderful experience, where there will be no destroying, no more pain or sickness, no poverty, no need to make money, nothing to do but enjoy eternal life and the friendship of the countless millions who are living that spiritual life with me. It is beyond my imagination, but I do sometimes stop to think of it and it robs me of the fear of death and confirms me in my faith in immortal life.

My creed is beginning to expand, I hope, into some thought of the Brotherhood of Man. I meet a good many men in the course of my acquaintance, who are sceptical about the possibility of it. They say that for centuries the Turk, for example, has never changed his personal habits and is not capable of becoming a Christian. I could not believe that and retain my faith in what Jesus said about drawing all men up unto Himself, or in His command to make disciples of the nations. I believe the time will come when there will be a Brotherhood of Man. A great many of my business acquaintances say that war will never cease, that we will always

need a large army and navy. I do not believe that myself, and that makes me stand somewhat alone. I think the God of power, working through human lives, can change the history of the world. If I did not believe that, I would not believe in the power of Jesus or His teachings.

I think I may add to this creed of mine, my belief in the power of the Bible and its teachings to educate the human race and make it what it ought to be. In the multiplicity of all the books that are being published, I find nothing which takes the place of the Old Book. It is the one Book in all the world that contains for me the Word of Life. I was brought up on it and from the time I was old enough to read, and even before that, in our home I heard it read by my mother and father, and it has become to me the very Word of God. I have no patience or sympathy with those who try to destroy it or change it. I want the old text because it has become a part of my vocabulary. I do not like, I am frank to say, these new versions. Some of my high-brow friends do not agree with me here and quote history and use the word "progress," but they do not mean anything to me by the side of the old language and old forms which have become a part of my very life. I would rather be narrow than be so broad that I am thin in this regard.

I think this sums up nearly all the things that are vital to me. When it comes to theological questions, I hardly feel competent to express an opinion. Some of my friends are very dogmatic about the person of Jesus and the evolution of man and the

inspiration of the Scriptures, and all that, and some of them seem to know exactly all about regeneration and foreordination and the doctrines that have had the right of way for so many years, but I do not feel like being dogmatic about most of them, although I suppose I am as narrow and dogmatic as the average man in some particulars, especially in my definition of the Bible and the Christian life. I hope I am not so bigoted as to think no one can get into heaven except along the track I walk, but sometimes I feel very certain that many who try to take cross-cuts will not get in. My creed somehow seems to simmer down to the right kind of life lived every day.

And as I sum it up, I find myself, the older I grow, more and more inclined to believe that, after all, my salvation depends upon my action, the treatment of my fellow-man, my own clean life, my love of little children, my faith in common honesty and common decency, and, above all, my faith in Jesus Christ, to forgive my sin and grant me salvation. And now you have the creed of the Mere Man, as I put it down on paper one day, and I think it sums up nearly all my articles. If I have omitted anything it is because it does not belong to the working, everyday program. There may be other very important things, which I ought to believe, but I like to think if I live up to what I have already put down it will keep me busy as long as I live here, and most of it, I hope, will be a part of my spiritual life in the world to come.

XXI

HIS "FUNDAMENTALS"

THOSE who have followed this simple narrative of the confessions and experiences of a Mere Man must have found out by this time that he has not at any time tried to pose as a perfect Christian or church-member. Neither has he considered it to be a part of his duty to lay down the law to others who belong to other churches as to how they ought to believe or behave. The Mere Man is just recording his own convictions and trying to make clear to his readers what are "Fundamentals" to him, after reading his Bible, and especially after studying the life and teachings of Jesus. If, after you have read this clear through, you find yourself differing from me, I am not going to quarrel with you or start up a long discussion over "arguments." I am going to state my own position and let it go at that. Your own views may be altogether different. I am not saying you ought to believe just as I do, or that you cannot be saved unless you come into my particular church fold and creed. But I am stating my own views, and my reasons for them.

I have not told you what church I belong to and I do not intend to. It is a church with a large

membership and a noble history. It contains a large number of good people who are trying to be Christian disciples. I expect to meet them in the other world along with millions of other Christians who do not belong to my church, but to other communions. I belong to my particular church because my family has always belonged to it. I could belong to any one of a dozen different denominations if my own did not happen to be organised in the town where I lived, and still believe that I would be fully saved and get to heaven at last. For I don't consider the membership in any particular church or the acceptance of any one particular creed to be the great essential to salvation in this world or the next.

My attention was drawn to this thing called "Fundamentalism" by a sermon which my pastor preached a few weeks ago on the subject, and what he said in this sermon sent me to the Bible to find out what the real fundamentals for salvation and the Christian discipleship really are. The whole discussion going on over this question has been a good thing for me, for I must confess I have never been much of a Bible student, and I have depended on what my minister has said or others have argued, for my own beliefs, instead of going after the truth myself.

Well, I approached the Bible with the frank purpose of letting it speak to me straight without any one else to get in between, and I have been surprised to find how simple the whole thing of fundamentals is when taken out of the region of

debate over man-made creeds and sectarianism and denominationalism and controversy.

The first thing that struck me with real force was that statement in Micah 6:8: "And what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

I said to myself, after reading that—"There is a 'fundamental'! The essence of religion does not consist in the acceptance of certain dogmas, but in social justice and in human kindness." For I went to the trouble to look up the derivation of that word which Micah uses and which is translated "Mercy" in the King James version, but "Kindness" in the American Revision, and I found that the word meant just that,—"Kindness,"—just the same thing that Jesus meant when He spoke of the attitude of the one who visited the prisoner, in his picture of the Last Judgment.

Then I read on in the same chapter in Micah until I came to this striking sentence,—“ Shall I be pure with wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights? ”

There was another "fundamental" covering the whole ground of man's dealings with his fellow man in the market place and in politics. And the more I studied the Old Testament Prophets and the teaching of the ministers, the more I became convinced that the one thing the Old Testament emphasises is "Righteousness." That is the one word that stands out clear and blazing white hot on the pages of the Bible. It is not assent to creeds and

doctrine that is fundamental, but *conduct*. The real fundamental is obedience to God's law of right living, of justice, and honesty and kindness to one's fellow man. I looked in vain all through the New Testament for any sign of a "fundamental" that told me I must believe what a church laid down or what a man-made creed stated in order to be saved, or to be pleasing to the Almighty. But I kept finding all over the pages of the Revelation, and especially in the writings of the Prophets, the burning emphasis was being put on *righteousness* of daily life. That was always fundamental. The love of God and obedience to His righteous law I found everywhere. And I did not find anywhere any mention made of a set of rules I must obey in order to become a member of the elect or to be a saved soul.

Then I went to the New Testament to find what Jesus really taught about salvation and discipleship, and I found what I believe is practically the same thing the Prophets talked all the time about. It is *life* that Jesus emphasises all the time. Traditions, ceremonies, rituals, forms, the whole scheme of dogmas that He rebuked in the Pharisees—these are of no account by the side of Righteousness of Life. And finally I came to His one and great "fundamental"—to His own creed—which was simply, Love God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, and your neighbour as yourself. That, summed up in the briefest creed ever made, is the Redeemer's own essential.

As I studied the Master's teaching in all the Gos-

pels I did not find a single requirement on his part that I must belong to a particular church or subscribe to any particular creed in order to be saved. I did find that I must believe in Him for salvation, but I did not find that I must believe in a particular church organisation in order to be His disciple or subscribe to a set of rules any body of men had drawn up before I could call myself a Christian. When I came to His picture of the last judgment I was struck with the astonishing statement that the eternal destiny of men was fixed by the way they had *behaved* towards their fellow men. There was not a syllable in that tremendous story to show that Jesus made a creed necessary to set one at the right hand of God. The one fundamental was based on the treatment one had given those in need. In other words, the fundamental came around again to righteousness, justice, kindness, love to God and man.

I am, of course, aware that at this point some people will probably throw this down and indig-
nantly want to know if I believe that a man can be saved simply by being moral. But I am not going to argue over the matter of my convictions, because I have found that arguments never convert people to your views, and also because I believe that Jesus taught that salvation was dependent on faith in Him. And any one who believes in Jesus as the Redeemer of the world is more than simply moral, he is ethical and spiritual and Christ-minded in addition to moral. But what I am saying is that if you are willing to pick up the book and go on, I am

describing what I found in the Bible about the fundamental to salvation and to discipleship, and I want to say again for good measure, that after going all over the Old and New Testament and making a careful study of the whole subject of salvation, I was not able to find a single command to subscribe to a certain creed or belong to a certain group of disciples in order to get into heaven or help some one else to get in. The only creed I found that was essential was the creed of love to God and man. Obedience to God's laws and God's ways, I found everywhere emphasised. But when it came to the matters that churches and preachers are emphasising at this time I did not find a single thing that looked to me like a fundamental.

You will be ready by this time to find out that I am not a sectarian. As a matter of fact, as I have already said, I could easily belong to a large number of Christian organisations, and find my Christ in all of them. I do not find, as the years go by, that I am dependent for my religious peace of mind or for my theological equilibrium on any set of creedal phrases that any particular church has drawn up. I find I am so busy trying to love God and my neighbour that I don't have time for much of anything else. And while I know better than any one else how poor a church member I have been and how far short I have come from the Christian discipleship ideal, still I don't believe that when my time comes to leave this world and pass into the other I shall have to pass an examination

on my church membership or my church creed before they will let me in through the pearly gates, but I do believe that my passing in and enjoying the fellowship of the saints in glory will depend on whether I have in this life lived a life of righteousness, and justice, and love, with the Jesus mind and the Jesus example. Those are the essential things to me. They are the fundamentals, and not any creedal assent to doctrinal statements made about the person of Jesus. He never made any such demands for Himself. And I cannot believe that He ever wants us to make them for ourselves or others.

So in summing up the matter of "Fundamentals" for myself I am putting them into the statements made by Micah and Jesus:

"What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

"The first commandment is this: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength and with all thy soul: and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

I am very well convinced that if even as imperfect a Christian as I am strives to obey these fundamentals he will be saved, in the largest sense of the word. As for me, I do not know any other fundamentals, and I am well convinced that if the preachers and churches will stop discussing all other matters and get down to living the fundamentals of

Micah and Jesus, Christianity will begin to conquer the world. If they will not do it, I have come to the conclusion that Jesus will be crucified again, and this time by those who should be crowning Him Lord of all.

XXII

“GROW OLD ALONG WITH ME”

I **THOUGHT** to say at the very beginning that I have always had an increasing dread of growing old. As I am writing down these thoughts I am just *sixty*. To a good many people that makes a man an old man. To a good many more, including myself, sixty is not old, but a sign that a man has just begun to learn something. But what I mean by saying I have had a dread of growing old is this: losing my memory, or my eyesight, or my hearing so that I have to say to people who are talking, “What did you say?” Or to find that I cannot hear the minister as plain as I used to, or the speaker in a large hall if I happen to be sitting pretty well back. And I have dreaded old age whenever I have thought of getting into the ranks of those men who are losing their minds, or are dependent on their children or relatives, on account of sickness. That last dread has at times been a regular nightmare to me, so great that without ever hinting anything of the sort to my wife, I have deep down in my mind almost resolved to end myself rather than be a dependent on any one in my old age. That has been more than a dread, it has been a real horror to me. That sounds pretty bad, but in talking the same thing over with one or two

old time acquaintances I find they have had the same thought. Of course, I don't ever intend to do anything of the sort.

But within the last year or two I have begun to take stock of the thing called “old age” in a somewhat different way. There must be some good reason why we come into this world like little babies and go out of it with more or less weakness like babies. I have sometimes thought that if I had had the arranging of human affairs I would have had us all start out the other way around, beginning old and keep growing younger all the time. But facing the facts as they are, and knowing that no matter what I do, I am powerless to keep from growing older, I have sort of made up my mind to make the best of the facts, and so far as I have any power to shape the way I shall grow old, I am determined that some of the things I am now going to mention will be a part of the program of my ascending years.

The first thing I have determined to do is to keep up my physical vitality, oil the machine and look over the different running parts very carefully, and consult an expert now and then when I am in doubt as to the best thing to do to get the most out of that part of me which is called animal.

The last thing I want to do is to sag down into an unkempt, untidy round-shouldered, big-waisted, slovenly-dressed “old man.” I see plenty of them on the street, and I shudder at the thought of some time becoming like them. I have all my life so far been blest with a good healthy body. My eyesight,

my teeth, my lungs, my heart, my stomach, my hearing, my muscles seem to be, in my sixtieth year, sound and, so far as I can see, not impaired. I can swim, saw wood, play ball, run an auto, box, eat three meals a day, and sleep sound all night, apparently as well as I could ten years ago. But I know I don't have the recuperative quality I had when I was twenty-one. And of course I know as well as anyone that I have to go a little slower up hill than when I climbed Pike's Peak one morning and was back at the Iron Springs before 3 P. M. I am therefore determined to study my body carefully and keep the animal looking and feeling right.

And that includes my personal appearance, not only on the street, but also in my own home. My wife told me once that the first thing that attracted her to me was not my handsome looks (I am not what you would call exactly a "good looker"), but my generally neat appearance, finger nails clean, hair trimmed, shoes blacked, and a collar that fitted with a tie that was not so loud that it drowned my talk. For forty years I have not forgotten that remark, and I have made up my mind to keep as well dressed and be as particular about my outward appearance as I was when I was courting her. I must say that is some "stunt," to use one of the Boy's words which he says his teacher authorises as not slang. But if I am going to keep from slumping down hill as I go on up the incline I realise I must not only "keep up appearances," but I must keep the "appearances up," if I would save myself from getting old as I grow old.

The next thing that I have resolved to do as I add years to my life is to hold on to the real friendships I have won. I find as a man grows older he is tempted to let go some of the best things of life, because of sheer laziness. The old enthusiasms, the old ambitions, the old shining ideals begin to fade out. It is easy to get careless about the duties of life. That is the reason it is a dangerous period when a man crosses the half century to get immoral. I think sometimes with fear of a certain period in my middle life when I seemed in danger of losing my moral standards, and letting go some of my youthful heroisms. But when it comes to human friendships, they are so valuable and so necessary that I am determined not to let them slip out of my life.

For I can see in our very neighbourhood illustrations of the terrible results of neglecting friendships. People of my acquaintance who have not kept up the neighbourly habit, who have not written old friends for years or gone into their homes and asked them into theirs, are sitting alone wondering why no one calls, why this dreadful silence and lonesomeness.

If there is anything more awful than just that I don't know what it is unless it is a growing knowledge that your mind is failing. And my wife and I are determined not to endure that tragedy. We are going to surround ourselves in our old age with the friends that we have made, and keep our house open to them. We have found we don't have to provide elaborate refreshments for our friends, or

even invite them in to meals, in order to keep up the joy of friendly companionship. All we have to do is to ask them to come around for an evening, and have a good time together. We have at least fifty different families included in that fellowship. And we don't have to hunt for amusements to keep us interested in the spare moments of the day. Our friends take care of all that. Which makes me think of one of the most dreadful things in the life of one of my business acquaintances who is getting old. He confessed to me the other day: "I really don't know what to do in the evening except to go to the movies. I put in nearly every evening at the movies to kill time." It was his epitaph he was giving me, although I suppose he had no notion that it was. After hearing that from him, I went right home and that evening I sent off a love letter to an old chum of mine I had known in Phillips Academy, and the next week I had the greatest return letter from him, so warm and big-hearted that it kept me younger for a week. Friendship! I am going to cling to it. For I am convinced that there is nothing quite so dreary as a friendless old age.

Along with this clinging to friends, I am also resolved to cultivate the friendship of the best books. I begin to find that one of the incidental blessings of growing old is the freedom from some duties that were compelling when I was a younger man. At this point I may state an opinion that is not held by some of those who are reading this account. But I believe when a man, at least I am speaking for a Mere Man, has done his full duty in

church and state, he is entitled to some few years of leisure, if there are other and younger men to go on with those same duties. I do not mean, of course, getting out from all civic and church work like a slacker or shirker, but I do mean that in a certain true sense the good Lord does not condemn a man for some happy leisure in his old age if he has earned it by doing his share when he was a fighter and an enthusiast in his youth.

At any rate, I find myself without any uneasiness of conscience seeing other and more vigorous men than myself in the church taking my old place on the Board of Trustees and on committees where I served for years, with patience if not with distinction, and I read about younger fellows down at the auditorium helping with their enthusiasm in mass meetings to clean up the town, and I stay at home nights instead of going out to every uplift gathering in the community, and somehow I feel no uneasiness on account of not being there. I feel rather as if, to compensate a man for a number of things he must give up as he gets on in years, he is entitled to a certain well-earned (supposing he has earned it) time which he may take for ripening and mellowing, and give the rising generation room to work off steam, unhindered by the old fellows hanging around telling them how to do it.

So, as I was saying, I am going to enjoy books and the leisure to read them and keep up with the best and newest thought, and not let my mind atrophy (I think that is the right word) for lack of stimulus.

I am also determined to keep up, as well as I can, with the news of the world, which is just as interesting now as it was when I was twenty-one. But I can think now of several men of my acquaintance who have left off being interested in mental exercises, and who have almost nothing to fall back on in the way of world events to think of or talk about, sitting around the drug store or with the boys at the fire station, not caring what happens to Russia or to know what is going on in London or Limerick. But that sort of decline and fall of my mentality would spell a dreary volume for this Mere Man, and as long as my eyesight will allow or asking questions of other well-informed people will continue I mean to be as much interested in the affairs of the universe as I am of the neighbourhood where I live.

There is another attitude of mind that I am going to encourage all the time if possible, and that is keeping friendly and sympathetic with the young generation. There is something terrible to my mind, in the way some people as they get old think and speak of the young, as if the whole world were going to the dogs, and all the young folks were silly flappers, and nothing like so good and noble as they used to be.

I may be all wrong, but I don't believe the old world is any worse than it always has been. As I think back to some of the old times, which some folks call the "good old times" I don't feel so sure that they were so very good after all. To my mind the whole world has always had a great mixture of

good and bad in it, and I can't make myself believe that after all the years that Jesus Christ has been loved and honoured by millions of human beings the world has grown worse. At any rate I know some very lovely and interesting young folks in our town. In fact, as I think them over, the majority of them are not what anyone would call bad. My wife and I were talking about this a few days ago, and she said to me: "How many young people are there in our neighbourhood that could be called really bad or immoral or silly?"

I called up in my mind the groups of boys and girls that troop past our house on the way to college and High School, young folks my wife and I have known ever since they were born, and as the vision of them went by I saw happy, laughing faces, no marks of dissipation or of vice, thought of the families from which they came where for generations way back a black sheep was as rare as a green cow, and remembered that a little while back when one of the girls in this neighbourhood lost her virtue it was so rare that it created a sensation that has not ceased yet. And I answered my wife by saying truthfully, "Most of them look to me just like young people have always looked. They are not saints, and we were not, either. But neither are most of them awful sinners. Just young folks with lots of faults and virtues, going to school, getting an education, having some purpose in life, and twenty years from now they will be found in the church and the legislature and running the banks and railroads and automobile factories just as their

fathers and mothers are now, and very few of them in jail or the insane asylum." And I named over dozens of these young folks who were attractive, intelligent and clean in purpose and plan. It may be that in other parts of the country the flappers and degenerates are in a majority, but they are not in our town, I am quite sure, and I shall continue to hold the opinion that there are more good than bad young folks in every generation.

In any case I don't want to belong to that class of old men who are in the habit of always harking back to the time when young people were not so irreverent or so godless or so frivolous or so lacking in purpose. I would hate to have someone who remembers, tell about all the mean and bad things I did when I was a boy. I have forgotten most of them, of course, as we always do when we get older, but I am very sure I did a-plenty, but by the grace of the good God and a good mother and a good wife and some effort of my own, I have turned out fairly well, and in my old age I want to think that even some flapper styles may in time become fairly decent citizens, and useful fathers and mothers.

Well, there are other things I have resolved to do as I pass on towards seventy or eighty, and the other day, when I felt like it, I put down some "Don'ts" for myself that if I have the common sense to obey may help to dignify my grey hairs, what I have left, and leave a general impression on the community of the Mere Man as not a nuisance or a fool. Perhaps you would be interested in a

partial list of these “Don’ts” which I am going to apply to my own case. They may not fit yours at all. But I am saying them over to myself now and then for my own benefit:

“Don’t make a nuisance of yourself by telling old stories that people have heard you tell before.

“Don’t mourn over the fact of younger men coming on to take your place in the church and in society and the state and in business. You have had your day. Be content with it.

“Don’t dwell constantly on the past. Look forward. Even old age has its privilege to look forward. Even youth can not do any more than that.

“Don’t be a pessimist. Especially when you are drawing nearer the world where a pessimist can not live.

“Don’t sag down mentally or spiritually. Read your Bible. Commune with the best minds. Get ready to meet them so that you can talk with the great and good without being ashamed of your ignorance of what they did and were.

“Don’t criticise young peoples’ efforts and compare them with yours. You have forgotten most of your own blunders.

“Don’t sit in the chimney corner and brood or pout because you are no longer noticed or if your name no longer appears in the paper. You have had your day!

“Don’t forget the existence you are before long going to enjoy. An existence in which all disappointments will be met with perfect satisfaction.”

I have not mentioned one other matter which I

regard as perhaps the most comforting and wholesome in my thought of old age coming on. It is the companionship of my wife. The children have left the home nest and have made their own. The Girl, as you may remember, left us years ago. She is waiting for us over there. My wife and I have visits from our sons and their families, and our grandchildren make music in our house. But when these visits are over and we are alone together, I know, as I look across the table at her, that we are growing old together. At first it used to fill me with real feeling of terror. But I have come to look at it differently. We are both determined to keep our youth as long as we can. I believe I can say truly that I love my wife better than I ever did in the wonderful courtship days. A few minutes ago she came into the room where I am writing this, and, bending over me, laid her dear face on mine and whispered something to me. We are still lovers. I know that that fact is one of the things that, more than any other, will keep us both from growing old disagreeably. If all the world loves a lover, it ought to love two lovers twice as much, and we are determined to give the old world a chance to do it in our case. Together, my wife and I are walking along the path that leads up to eternal Light and Love. And I believe we have conquered the terrors of old age by never getting old as we grow older.

XXIII

THE WONDER AND BEAUTY OF DEATH

IN telling you about my old age, I confessed that I used to have a great dread of it. But if old age or the thought of it gave me a feeling of dread, Death was an added terror. I feared it more than any earthly calamity, and looked forward to it with feelings of dismay. Not even my Christian faith in the other world seemed to give me much relief. I loved life intensely, and somehow I could not imagine any other kind of life except the kind I had always known.

A part of this dread of death, I think, grew upon me from the impression I received at funeral services. Nearly all that I attended (and while I was a deacon in the church it fell to me to attend a good many), were very gloomy and depressing. Our minister is a good man and a faithful pastor. And yet, I am sorry to say, he made a funeral service very depressing. Of course you don't expect a funeral service to be hilarious, but I cannot help believing that many ministers make a mistake in conducting funerals as if there was no such thing as immortality or a resurrection. As I think forward to my own funeral service I want it to be a cheerful occasion. I hope the minister will fill the hearts of every one present with hope. I want the

hymns to be songs of triumph. If I die before my wife does I want her to go from that service out to the grave radiant in the exultant belief that I am alive as I never was before, and happy as I never was before, and surrounded by a wonder and a beauty such as this world never dreamed of in its most exalted and ecstatic moments.

You will see from these last sentences that I have changed my thought of death very materially within the last few years I have been thinking about it. In fact, I can truly say that in place of dread I have come to anticipate the wonderful event that will usher me into a world of beauty and wonder, and sometimes I can hardly wait for that change to take place.

The thing that more than any other has caused this change in my feelings is a renewed study of all that Jesus said about death, and the future, together with all that His disciples said, as they were inspired with revelations of spiritual insight into the glories of the other world.

And the more I study the revelation that Jesus makes about death and the future the more I am amazed that I ever could have any dread of death or any shrinking from leaving this world, for the things I find stated as facts about death and the future are in a condensed form something like this:

There is, without any question, a future world. God is the God of the living, and not of the dead.

This future world will be to those who are in harmony with it and have the living faith, a world without pain, sickness, trouble, fear.

Those whom we have known and loved will be known and loved there. Moses and Elijah were recognised by the disciples at the Transfiguration.

The most ideal word which Jesus used to describe the future existence was the most ideal word we have here, the nearest word he could use to describe a home. "A Dwelling Place" is the best translation of the word "Mansions" in John's Gospel. "An abiding place," not a transient abode or a thing that was temporary, but an eternal home.

Also as I study the New Testament on the subject of death, the less I dread the thought of having to wait a long time before I shall begin to enjoy heaven and the companionship of my friends. I used to think that I would lie in the darkness unconscious. But I now believe that the very instant my spirit is released from the body I shall be conscious of my existence in the other world. Jesus said to the dying robber, "This very day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Not a moment of waiting. An instant, happy, wonderful introduction into wonders and beauties that the imagination cannot conceive.

In addition to the impression which a regular funeral service used to have on me to make me fear death, was the universal fact that after death occurs, there is a silence, unbroken by those who have gone from us.

Of course I know that a good many people claim to have had messages from those who have died, but I cannot find, after the most careful reading and talking with such people, that even supposing

such messages have been received, they tell us anything that we do not already know through the revelation in the Bible, and I cannot find in any of the teachings of Jesus a single word of His which tells us how to communicate with the friends whose bodies have died, nor indeed, any hint that such a thing is at all necessary for our happiness or comfort. The silence of Jesus on the subject of communication with those who have gone into the other world is proof enough to me that He did not consider the subject worth talking about. But, like very many human beings, who for all the centuries have puzzled over the question of spirit communication, I was puzzled over His silence. Why had He not said anything about a matter over which millions of people have conjectured?

And I finally answered this question for myself in a way that satisfies me. It may not meet your questioning at all. But in all these confessions that I have been making during these talks I have given my own experiences and my own convictions, knowing all the time that many of my readers would not agree with me because perhaps their histories have not been like mine.

Let me put the case like this. Last year my mother's body died. I believe she was a saint if there ever were one. She must be living in that other world somewhere, fully alive with all the faculties at their best that she ever knew here, or at least some form of conscious existence that is all aglow with joy and light.

But although I have many a time wished I might

see her and hear her dear voice again, not a hint of any such thing has ever come to me. I have not seen her nor heard her voice, and I have come to this conclusion or perhaps it is two conclusions. The element or factor of time is not a part of the future existence. There are no clocks in heaven, for the spirits are living in eternity. And I believe the time that has elapsed since mother's body died and a whole year to me has been less than a second to her. So on that account she has not missed me any more than she would miss me when she was living here, if she stepped out of our dining room into our parlour just for a moment while I was sitting in the dining room where I had just been talking with her. That is a very crude way of telling what I feel, but I don't know any other way to say it. I am not a philosopher at all, and anyone who is may laugh at my idea of time to a spirit, but it helps me to account for the silence, and until someone proves to me that I am wrong I am going to let the explanation satisfy me.

But the other conclusion I have reached is more satisfactory to my mind in explaining the silence between my mother and me. And that is the fact that I have no doubt she is so tremendously taken up with the number of wonderful and beautiful happenings that are going on since she entered the other world and so caught up in a new experience, that she for the time being is not thinking of me or of any earthly event.

I have been trying to name over the friends and relatives that my mother loved who are over there

where she is. There are her own father and mother, two brothers and a sister and four of their children, and our own Girl, very many dearly loved Uncles and Aunts, of whom I remember hearing her speak in the warmest terms of affection. Then there is a great company of church members that mother worked with all her life, and with whom she was on the most intimate terms, and old teachers and pastors who had been of the greatest service to her in her girlhood. And then I have been adding to the list the almost uncounted number of persons of whom I have heard mother speak, whom she often said she wished she could meet, but was not able, on account of the fact, of course, that she had never had any opportunity to meet them and never could do so on account of physical limitations, and the different ages in which they lived. And after letting my imagination play around all these facts of the glory and supreme joy of meeting all these friends and great people, I have had to consider also the many beautiful scenes that every moment are thronging before my mother's spirit. I suppose the reason we do not have more details about the facts of the other world is because human earthly language cannot make us understand the wonders of heaven.

An attempt is made in the Book of the Revelation. I often read those descriptions of the Holy City. And of late I have begun to catch some glimpses of the things the writer is trying so hard to convey to the human mind. They are very faint glimpses of the realities over there. But I take the

descriptions as touches of glory indescribable, and in all that glory my mother is at this moment living. Is it any wonder I do not hear from her? She is in the grasp of a *new experience*! Why should I want to take her away from all that wonder and that beauty? Especially if, as I believe, it is only a second of time to her since she talked with me? But consider how long she would love to visit with her father and mother and the Girl! And all those other dear friends! She always grieved over the fact that she did not have time to be with her friends as much as she liked because both she and the friends were so busy. Now she has all time. What perfect enjoyment to know that she will not have to hurry any more as long as she lives!

And that leads me to go on to say, seeing this is not a logically connected discourse, but more or less of a ramble, that after thinking of the time my mother would want to take to meet and visit with old friends, I have begun to understand, partly at least, how eternity is going to be spent. Of course when we begin to talk about such things as space and time we get into pretty deep water, but it used to puzzle me what a spirit could find to do in a world where there was no money to make and no need of eating or sleeping or working, or providing for old age and so on.

And I have begun to believe that a good many millions of years (to use a time measure) can well and happily be spent in just meeting all the other people over there. Have you never thought of great and good men and women you wished you

might meet and visit with? I am anticipating that experience, with a great deal of eagerness. After reading Tennyson and Browning and our own poets, Whittier and Longfellow and Sidney Lanier and others, I have very often wished, yes, longed, that I might be permitted to meet them face to face. Just think, I say to myself, I shall in that other world have that opportunity! And consider the throngs of the great and good in all the ages whom we have never been able to know here in the flesh, but whom we shall know in the spirit! Have you never longed to talk with Peter? And with the Apostle Paul? And with Luther, and John Knox and Abraham Lincoln and Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Fry and John Howard, and Dwight L. Moody and Theodore Roosevelt? How few of us ever have a chance, as we call it, to get acquainted with these famous people of the earth's history. But death will open the door to their friendship, for one of the things which I believe to be true of that other world is the complete passing away of all false distinctions of greatness, and the spirits of the just made perfect will welcome into their most intimate companionship all other spirits that love the same Redeemer and have lived with a desire to do His will on earth.

Think of the great army of martyrs in all the ages who have given their lives for their faith! Think of the numberless host of men and women, and even children, who have prayed the Lord's prayer and called Jesus, Master and Friend! Think of the mighty myriads of souls who are worth

knowing and being with in all eternity. If I have nothing else to do but meet and commune with those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, that group alone would take more time than I am able to measure with my poor and halting imagination.

But I am becoming convinced that somewhere in the other world there will be some sort of noble and wonderful and beautiful work to do suited to each one's ability and talent. It will not be an idle life over there. It may be that in the mysterious realms of space there are other worlds inhabited by beings in need of spirit help and sacrifice. It may well be that in the great plan of the Almighty those who have loved and served Him here will have given them some mighty and beautiful task that will call forth their strongest powers. For does it not say, "His servants shall do him service"? What service will He require over there? I do not know. But whatever it may be it is a majestic hint of the going on of an intelligent energy that shall work without fatigue, and love without sin.

I hope no one will call what I have so far said about death fantastic or visionary, or unreal or absurd. If anything I have imagined about the other life is absurd, what is *your* thought of it? What do people generally think about when they think of heaven? If I judge others from my own way of picturing the real life over there I am free to say that most folks do not have any picture in their minds except the most confused and unsatisfactory. I know I had nothing that made me

happy in my thought of the future until I began to picture some things that seem to me to be in keeping with the knowledge of the love of God for His children. I believe He would like to have us think of death and the future without fear or dread, and anticipate something great about it. I believe we do not talk about death and the future in our homes and in common conversation as we should. We are afraid to talk about them. Then when the event comes it smites us with a shock, just as if death were a horror that could not be mentioned except in whispers and with gloomy looks. Whereas, to my mind it is just as natural to die as it is to be born. And as I get on in years and know that I must go the way of all the earth I find my mind entertaining these thoughts of death which I have mentioned, and I thank the good God that at last my fear is gone and I am awaiting this new experience, not with a vulgar curiosity, but with a good deal of happy wonder. The first thing I shall want to do is to meet my mother and my friends. And in some way that I cannot make my mind convey to myself or to you, I have a conviction that they will reveal to me the splendour and the fearful beauty of the Redeemer before whom my spirit shall bow in an adoring love that shall in one moment obliterate all sorrows and petty selfishness. But no matter what the details of that existence may be, of this I am absolutely certain. I shall exist in the full tide of exultant life, free from all pain, with no disappointed ambitions, with no selfish struggles for gain, with no mean hatreds, with all race feeling swept away,

with no anxiety on account of growing infirmities of the body, with no sorrows or griefs, and in the forever companionship of those I have loved here.

Ah! Yes! I have not forgotten the Girl! When I spoke of meeting my mother first of all I had in my mind, unspoken in my thought, the vision of the Girl as she left us that day when she said, "I will be waiting for you in that other home!" How she and the mother will greet me together! For I am sure they have been together all this time! And if my dear wife should go before I do, what a vision of unspeakable delight will be the sight of them as they greet my spirit in those realms of Light where there is no need of lamp, neither of sun, for the Lord God will give us light. And in some great and unthinkable way, but in a way which He has thought out for us, we shall reign with Him forever and ever!

"O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" And what says the good Quaker Poet whom I never knew here, but whose friendship and companionship I shall anticipate over there,—

*"And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.*

*"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."*

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